15¢

AUGUST 1940

Famous FANTASTIC Mysteries

Darkness *and* Dawn

By **GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND**

A Great Adventure-Fantasy

The Rebel Soul

By **AUSTIN HALL**

An Amazing Weird Story

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOOD BYE DANDRUFF SYMPTOMS!

THE TREATMENT

MEN: Douse full strength Listerine Antiseptic on the scalp morning and night.

WOMEN: Part the hair at various places, and apply Listerine Antiseptic right along the part with a medicine dropper, to avoid wetting the hair excessively.

Always follow with vigorous and persistent massage with fingers or a good hair brush. Continue the treatment so long as dandruff is in evidence. And even though you're free from dandruff, enjoy a Listerine massage once a week to guard against infection. Listerine is the same antiseptic that has been famous for more than 50 years as a mouth wash and gargle.

Soothing Listerine Antiseptic Treatment gives hair and scalp antiseptic bath . . . kills millions of germs associated with infectious dandruff

If infectious dandruff has got you in its grip . . . if you are constantly embarrassed by all the ugly, distressing symptoms of this stubborn disease—the humiliating flakes and scales, the itching, or even inflammation . . . here's news—*grand news!*

Listerine Antiseptic kills millions of the germs associated with the infectious type of dandruff—an all too common form of this scalp condition. It destroys, on contact, countless numbers of these tiny, almost invisible parasites, including the queer "bottle bacillus," called Pityrosporum Ovale, which outstanding specialists recognize as a causative agent of infectious dandruff.

First Listerine treats hair and scalp to a cooling, soothing antiseptic bath. The scalp tingles and glows, ugly flakes and scales begin to go . . . inflammation and itching are alleviated. Then Listerine gets to work on the germs themselves. In test after test, in laboratory and clinic, Listerine Antiseptic's germicidal action brought amazingly quick results.

Improvement in 76% of Test Cases

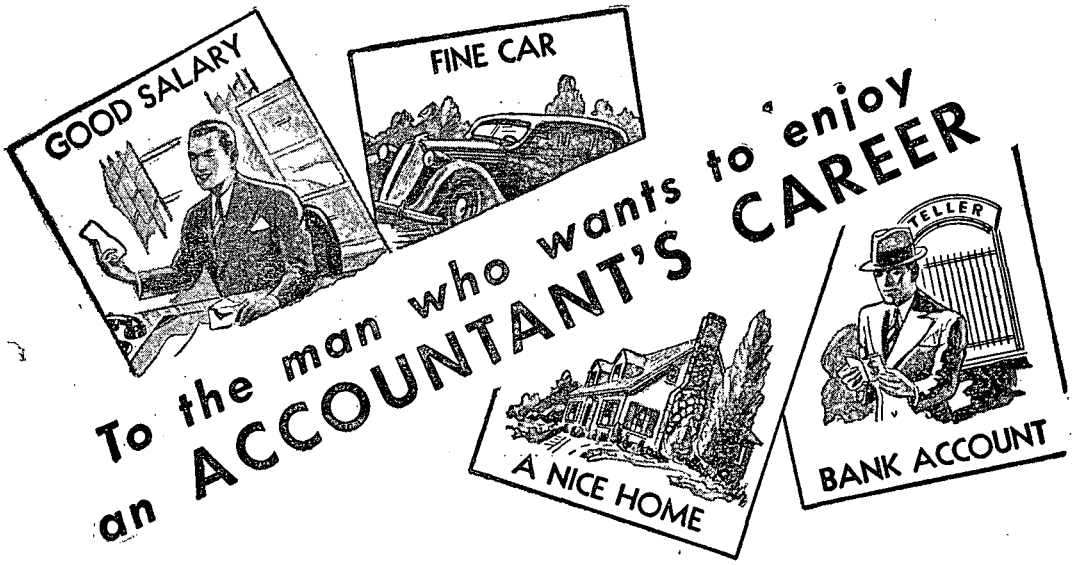
When rabbits were inoculated with Pityrosporum Ovale in laboratory research, they quickly developed the usual dandruff symptoms. Within 14 days, on the average, these symptoms disappeared when Listerine Antiseptic was applied daily to the affected areas.

Clinical tests on men and women who used Listerine Antiseptic and massage twice a day brought even more impressive results. In one series of tests, 76% of dandruff sufferers showed either complete disappearance of or marked improvement in the symptoms of dandruff within 30 days. So, if you have the slightest sign of a dandruff condition, do not neglect what may be a real infection. Start right now with Listerine Antiseptic and massage. Neglect may aggravate the symptoms.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., *St. Louis, Mo.*

LISTERINE...THE MEDICAL TREATMENT THOUSANDS EMPLOY!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $2,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

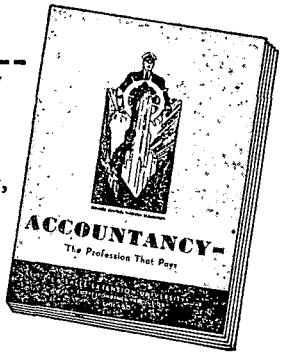
Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained.* It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

Write For This Free Book

For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now.*

Over 1850 Certified Public Accountants among LaSalle alumni



LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

4101 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 758-HR, Chicago, Ill.

I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

Name.....

Address..... *City*.....

Position..... *Age*.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Famous FANTASTIC Mysteries

Vol. II AUGUST, 1940 No. 3

Complete Book-Length Novel

DARKNESS AND DAWN.....George Allan England 6

Chapter I The Awakening
" II Realization
" III On the Tower Platform
" IV The City of Death
" V Exploration
" VI Treasure-Trove
" VII The Outer World
" VIII A Sign of Peril
" IX Headway Against Odds
" X Terror
" XI Eight Hundred Years!
" XII Drawing Together
" XIII The Great Experiment
" XIV The Moving Lights
" XV Portents of War
Chapter XVI The Gathering of the Hordes
" XVII Stern's Resolve
" XVIII The Supreme Question
" XIX The Unknown Race
" XX The Curiosity of Eve
" XXI Eve Becomes an Amazon
" XXII Gods!
" XXIII The Obeah
" XXIV The Fight in the Forest
" XXV The Goal, and Through It
" XXVI Beatrice Dares
" XXVII To Work!
" XXVIII The Pulverite
" XXIX The Battle on the Stairs
" XXX Consummation

Complete Novelet

THE REBEL SOUL.....Austin Hall 80

Short Story

HALF PAST TWELVE IN ETERNITY.....Robert W. Sneddon 118

Features

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND.....An Autobiography 79
THE EDITORS' PAGE..... 117
THE READERS' VIEWPOINT..... 121

The October Issue Will Be On Sale August 7

A RED STAR *Magazine*

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.
WILLIAM T. DEWART, *President & Treasurer* WILLIAM T. DEWART, JR., *Secretary*
PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE, 111 Rue Réaumur
LONDON: THE CONTINENTAL PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS, LTD., 3 La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C. 4

Copyright, 1940, by Frank A. Munsey Company. Published bi-monthly. Single copies 15 cents. By the year $0.75; in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; Canada, $1.00. Other countries, $1.50. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Entered as second class matter October 6, 1939 at the post office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Printed in U. S. A.

Other RED STAR *Magazines*

FANTASTIC NOVELS • RED STAR MYSTERY • ARGOSY • RED STAR ADVENTURES • CRACK-SHOT WESTERN • *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY* • *RED STAR DETECTIVE* • *CONFESSION NOVEL OF THE MONTH* • *RED STAR* WESTERN • RED STAR LOVE REVELATIONS • FOREIGN LEGION ADVENTURES • RED STAR SECRET CONFESSIONS • DOUBLE DETECTIVE • ALL STORY-LOVE • BIG CHIEF WESTERN • LOVE NOVEL OF THE MONTH • CAVALIER CLASSICS • RAILROAD MAGAZINE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Here it is! My Taste-Tempting GIN with the Flavor of Luscious, Ripe Oranges!"

GIVE your taste a change—try my Orange Flavored Gin today! It's a gin with all the luscious tang and flavor of juicy, sun-kissed oranges. Yes, and a liquor with the robust vigor of full 70 proof. Drink it just as you would Dry Gin. A handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle.

OLD MR. BOSTON ORANGE *Flavored* GIN

Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.

ALSO MINT FLAVORED GIN AND SLOE GIN—70 PROOF

WILL YOU WEAR THIS SUIT

and Make up to $12 in a Day!

● Let me send you a fine all-wool union tailored suit *FREE OF ONE PENNY COST.* Just follow my easy plan and show the suit to your friends. Make up to $12 in a day easily. *Partial Payment Plan. No experience—no house-to-house canvassing necessary.*

SEND FOR SAMPLES—FREE OF COST

Write today for FREE details. ACTUAL SAMPLES and "sure-fire" money-getting plans. Send no money.

H. J. COLLIN, PROGRESS TAILORING COMPANY 500 So. Throop Street, Dept. G-103, Chicago, Illinois

Partial Payment Plan Pays Big!

CASH for UNUSED POSTAGE

U. S. Stamps wanted at 90% of Face Value. Money Order, check or cash sent on receipt. Send Stamps Registered Mail.

United Trading, Dept. M5—1470 Broadway, N.Y.C.

Send for FREE CIRCULAR of PHOTOSTAMPS. Your favorite picture on stamp at 1c each in lots of 100. *Agents wanted.*

NATIONAL PHOTOSTAMPS—Dept. M2—152 W. 42nd St., N.Y.C.

REDSTAR MAGAZINE

The Hallmark of Quality Fiction

You can't go wrong with any magazine bearing this mark!

BE A PASSENGER

Traffic Inspector

Let Us Help You to a Good Job

Write for Free Booklet describing our 21 years' experience in securing jobs for our graduates that pay up to $135 per month, plus expenses, to start. Opportunities in Railway and Bus. Easy, home-study course will train you in a few months. **STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 5007, Buffalo, N. Y.**

GUARANTEED TIRES!

FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

GOODYEAR·GOODRICH FIRESTONE·U.S. and Other Standard Makes

WORLD'S LOWEST TIRE PRICES

$2.15 29x4.40-21

Thousands of American customers can vouch for the **long, hard service** given by our **Standard Brand** reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired with high-grade materials and rigidly inspected by tire experts before shipping. **24 years' Experience** enables us to quote **lowest prices** with **legal agreement** to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give **complete satisfaction.** Tires returned must be prepaid; prices quoted and replacements fob Chicago.

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.65	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
6.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95	33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
31x4	2.95	1.25	34x4½	3.45	1.45
32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65	1.65
33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75	1.75
34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95	1.75
32x4½	3.35	1.45			

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES

(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95	34x7	$10.95	$4.65
33x5	3.95	1.75	38x7	10.95	4.65
34x5	4.25	2.25	36x8	11.45	4.95
32x6	7.95	2.95	40x8	13.25	4.95
36x6	9.95	4.45			

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65	7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
6.50-20	4.45	1.95	8.25-20	8.95	4.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.00-20	10.95	5.65
			9.75-20	13.95	6.45

ALL OTHER SIZES **DEALERS WANTED**

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.

2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 4601-A, Chicago, Ill.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Exciting Reading!

If you really like your reading matter straight, hard bitten, dynamic, you'll eat up FRIDAY. Eager readers have swept the newsstands clean, week after week, stopped still in their tracks to read this absorbing magazine.

You'll cheer for FRIDAY. You'll love its fiction, exciting, gripping, stark. No where else will you find such brilliant, searching articles, such unusual and significant pictures, such cartoons. Get FRIDAY on your newsstand today—and expect great things.

Starting soon in FRIDAY a new novel by UPTON SINCLAIR, a timely and amazing tale of intrigue and adventure in war torn Europe, of plot and counter plot among the war makers and munitions kings. Make sure of getting every issue—subscribe. Trial offer—15 weeks for one dollar. Use coupon.

The Censors Never Work On . . .

Friday

The Completely New Kind of Weekly Magazine

LEVERETT S. GLEASON, Circulation Manager,
FRIDAY, Inc., Dept. FM,
114 East 32nd St., N.Y.C.

I enclose $1 for which send me 15 weeks of FRIDAY magazine.

Name ..... *Street* .....

City ..... *State* .....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET YOUR BODY OUT OF THE DUMPS

Stimulate Digestion Build Up Vitality

Feel down in the dumps? Lack your old PEP? Have frequent slight digestive upsets? Then—if there is nothing organically wrong with you—SLUGGISH DIGESTION may have you down. It can give you heartburn, gas, a dizzy head.

Don't resort to harsh laxatives or drugs for sluggish digestion. START those slow DIGESTIVE JUICES FLOWING FASTER. Set the millions of tiny cells of Fleischmann's live Yeast to work on these digestive-juice glands. This yeast is a STIMULATOR. It starts digestive juices flowing faster. In test cases digestion was greatly increased. Eat Fleischmann's Yeast regularly. Two cakes a day—one first thing in the morning, one a half hour before supper. See if you don't begin to FEEL LIKE A MILLION. Write today for "You Can't Feel Well If Digestive Juices Are Failing." F. Y. Co., Dept. H-J, 695 Washington St., New York. Absolutely FREE.

Copyright, 1940, Standard Brands Incorporated

TRAIN FOR **Electricity**

I'll Finance Your Tuition

Learn by Doing, in 12 weeks, in big shops of Coyne—**Not** home study or correspondence. Earn while learning. Free employment service after graduation. Write for details of my Pay after Graduation Plan and Free book.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. BO-52
500 South Paulina Street • • Chicago, Illinois

HAY-FEVER *Quick Relief*

Clarke's New Discovery Guaranteed.
Prevents and relieves Suffering without medicine or injections. Send 3¢ stamp for details. Prove it yourself!

CLARKE RESEARCH LABORATORY
363-DN. E. 76th Street, Miami, Florida.

Classified Advertisements

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the HOME, OFFICE, FARM, or PERSON; to offer, or seek, an unusual BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

EDUCATIONAL

CLINICAL LABORATORY TECHNIQUE taught in your own home at actual cost. Bulletin free.
IMPERIAL TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
Box 198 Elkhart, Indiana.

CORRESPONDENCE courses and educational books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog FREE. Write NELSON COMPANY, 500 Sherman, Dept. G214, Chicago.

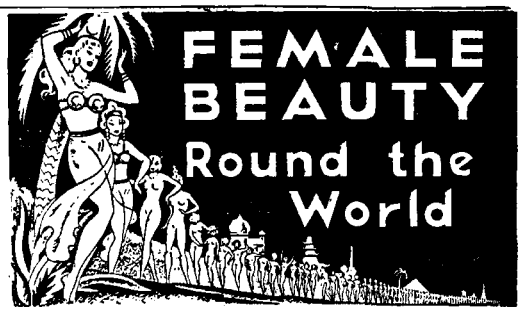
PHOTO DEVELOPING & FINISHING

TRIAL ROLL 10c AND THIS AD
Beautiful deckled prints. Free Pocket Album. Positively finest finish obtainable.
MAILBAG, Box 5440A, Chicago.

SONG POEMS WANTED

WANTED AT ONCE ORIGINAL POEMS
For musical setting. Publication, radio, recording service. Don't delay—send poem today for immediate consideration.
RICHARD BROS., 61 Woods Bldg., Chicago.

SONG POEMS WANTED
by professional music writers. Send poem now for free examination and criticism.
FIVE STAR MUSIC MASTERS, 612 Beacon Building, Boston, Mass.



WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE & SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS

NOW you can travel round the world with the most daring adventurers. You can see with your own eyes the weirdest peoples on earth. You witness the strangest customs of the red, white, brown, black and yellow races. You attend their startling rites, their mysterious practices. They are all assembled for you in these five great volumes of The SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND.

600 LARGE PAGES

Here is the world's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs. Here are Exotic Photos from Europe, Primitive Photos from Africa, Torture Photos from Asia, Female Photos from Oceania and America, and hundreds of others. There are almost 600 **LARGE PAGES OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS**, each page 57 square inches in size!

1,000 REVEALING PHOTOS

You see actual courtship practiced in every quarter of the world. You see magic and mystery in queer lands where the foot of a white man has rarely trod. You see Oriental modes of marriage and female slavery in China, Japan, India, etc. Through the intimacy of the camera you witness the exotic habits of every continent and the strangest customs of life and love in America, Europe, etc. You are bewildered by these large pages of **ONE THOUSAND PHOTOGRAPHS.** Including 130 full-page photos, and thrilled by the hundreds of short stories that describe them.

CONTENTS OF 5-VOLUME SET
VOLUME 1—The Secret Album of Africa
VOLUME 2—The Secret Album of Europe
VOLUME 3—The Secret Album of Asia
VOLUME 4—The Secret Album of America
VOLUME 5—The Secret Album of Oceania

5 PICTURE-PACKED VOLUMES

SPECIMEN PHOTOS
Various Secret Societies
Civilized Love vs. Savage
Strange Crimes, Criminals
Exotic Rites & Cults
Omens, Totems & Taboos
Mysterious Customs
Dress and Undress Round the World
1,000 Strange and Secret Photos

The **SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND** consists of five picture-packed volumes (solidly bound together for convenient reading). Dip into any one of these volumes, and as you turn its pages, you find it difficult to tear yourself away. Here in story and unusual photo is the **WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS**, containing everything from Female Beauty Round the World to the most Mysterious Cults and Customs. These hundreds and hundreds of large pages will give you days and nights of thrilling instruction.

SEND NO MONEY

Simply sign and mail the coupon. Remember, each of the 5 Volumes is 9¼ inches high, and opened over a foot wide. Remember also that this 5-Volume Set formerly sold for $10. And it is bound in expensive "life-time" cloth. Don't put this off. Fill out the coupon, drop it in the next mail, and receive this huge work at once.

METRO PUBLICATIONS, 70 5th Ave., Dept. 306, New York

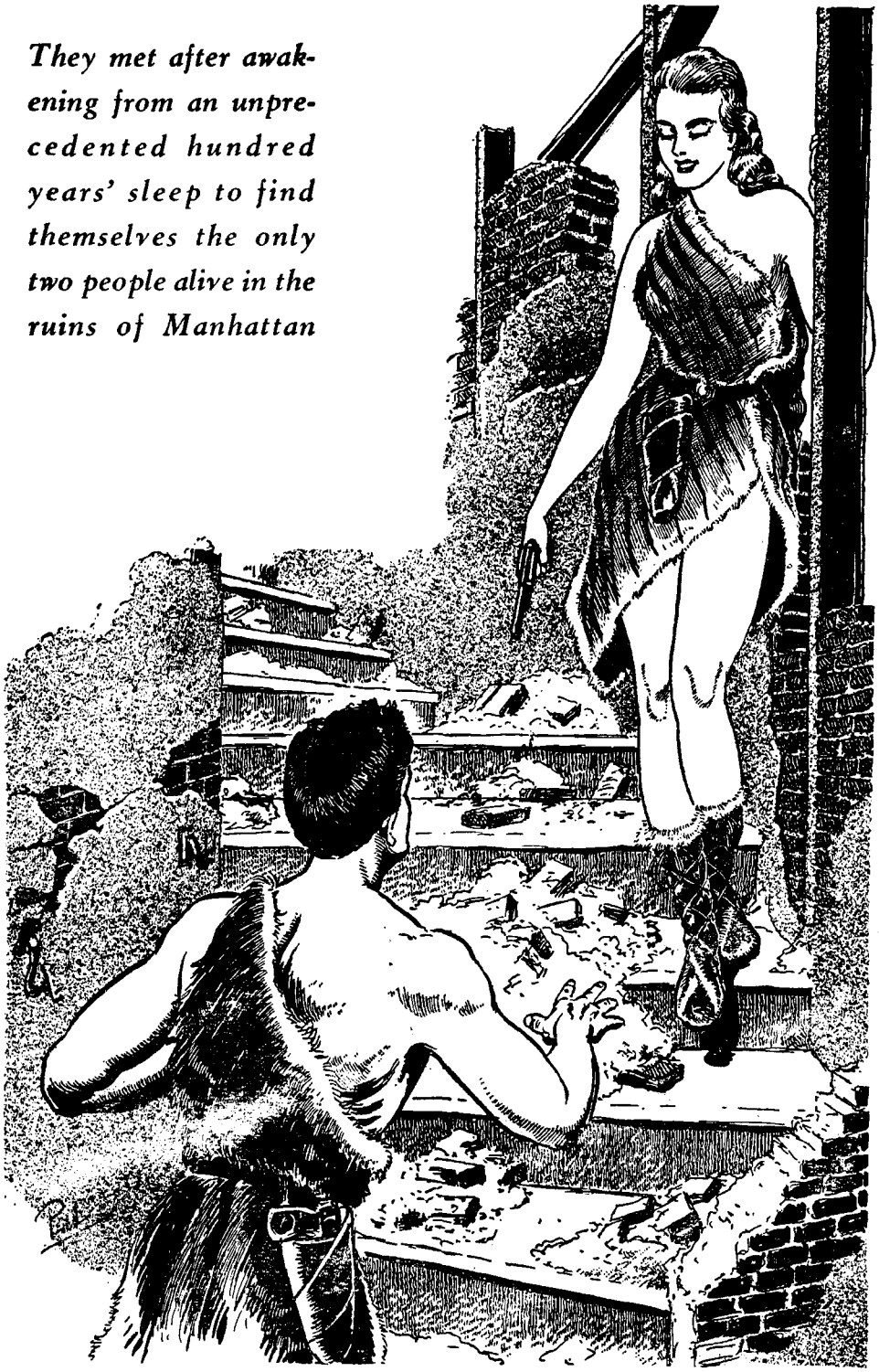
Send me "The Secret Museum of Mankind" (5 great volumes bound together). I will pay postman $1.98, plus postage on arrival. If not delighted, I will return book in 5 days for full refund of $1.98.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....State.....

☐ CHECK HERE if you are enclosing $1.98, thus saving mailing costs. Same Money-Back Guarantee.
Canadian Orders $2.50 in advance

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They met after awakening from an unprecedented hundred years' sleep to find themselves the only two people alive in the ruins of Manhattan



The girl, laughing and flushed and very beautiful in her primitive Bengal skin, met him at the foot of the stairs. "Were you frightened?" she asked, as he stood speechless and pale. "Why, what could happen to me here?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Silent behind them lay the ruined city with its crowding forests, its thousands of gaping vacancies—a world devoid of human life

Darkness and Dawn

By GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

A Complete Novel

CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING

DIMLY, like the daybreak glimmer of a sky long wrapped in fogs, a sign of consciousness began to dawn in the face of the tranced girl.

Once more the breath of life began to stir in that full bosom, to which again a vital warmth had on this day of days crept slowly back.

And as she lay there, prone upon the dusty floor, her beautiful face buried and shielded in the hollow of her arm, a sigh welled from her lips.

Life—life was flowing back again! The miracle of miracles was growing to reality.

Faintly now she breathed; vaguely her heart began to throb once more. She stirred. She moaned, still for the moment powerless to cast off wholly the enshrouding incubus of that tremendous, dreamless sleep.

Copyright 1912 by The Frank A. Munsey Company

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then her hands closed. The finely tapered fingers tangled themselves in the masses of thick, luxuriant hair which lay outspread all over and about her. The eyelids trembled.

And, a moment later, Beatrice Kendrick was sitting up, dazed and utterly uncomprehending, peering about her at the strangest vision which since the world began has ever been the lot of any human creature to behold. The vision of a place transformed beyond all power of the intellect to understand.

For of the room which she remembered, which had been her last sight when (so long, so very long, ago) her eyes had closed with that sudden and unconquerable drowsiness, of that room, I say, remained only walls, ceiling, floor of rust-red steel and crumbling cement.

Quite gone was all the plaster, as by magic. Here or there a heap of whitish dust betrayed where some of its detritus still lay.

Gone was every picture, chart, and map which—but an hour since, it seemed to her—had decked this office of Allan Stern, consulting engineer; this aerie up in the forty-eighth story of the Metropolitan Tower.

Furniture there now was none. Over the still intact glass of the windows cobwebs were draped so thickly as almost to exclude the light of day—a strange, fly-infested curtain where once neat green shade-rollers had hung.

Even as the bewildered girl sat there, lips parted, eyes wide with amaze, a spider seized his buzzing prey and scampered back into a hole in the wall.

A huge, leathery bat, suspended upside down in the far corner, cheeped with dry, crepitant sounds of irritation.

Beatrice rubbed her eyes.

"What?" she said, quite slowly. "Dreaming? How singular! I only wish I could remember this when I wake up. Of all the dreams I ever had, this one's certainly the strangest. So real, so vivid! Why, I could swear I was awake—and yet—"

All at once a sudden doubt flashed into her mind. An uneasy expression dawned across her face. Her eyes grew wild with a great fear; the fear of utter and absolute incomprehension.

Something about this room, this weird awakening, bore in upon her consciousness the dread tidings this was not a dream!

Something drove home to her the fact that it was real, objective, positive! And with a gasp of fright she struggled up amid the litter and the rubbish of that uncanny room.

"Oh!" she cried in terror, as a huge scorpion, malevolent, and with its tail raised to strike, scuttled away and vanished through a gaping void where once the corridor door had swung. "Oh, oh! Where am I? What, *what has happened?*"

Horrified beyond all words, pale and staring, both hands clutched to her breast, whereon her very clothing now had torn and crumbled, she faced about.

It seemed to her as though some monstrous, evil thing was lurking in the dim corner at her back. She tried to scream, but no sound, save a choked gasp, issued from her lips.

Then she started toward the doorway. Even as she took the first few steps her gown, a mere tattered mockery of raiment, fell away from her.

And, confronted by a new problem, she stopped short. She peered about her in vain for something to protect her disarray. There was nothing.

"Why, where's my chair? My desk?" she exclaimed thickly, starting toward the place by the window where they should have been, and were not. Her shapely feet fell soundlessly in that strange and impalpable dust which coated everything.

"My typewriter? Can that be my typewriter? Great Heavens! What's the matter here, with everything? Am I mad?"

There before her lay a somewhat larger pile of dust mixed with soft and punky splinters of rotten wood. Amid all this decay she saw some bits of rust, a corroded type-bar, or two, even a few rubber keycaps, still recognizable, though with the letters quite obliterated.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All about her, veiling her completely in a mantle of wondrous gloss and beauty, her lustrous hair fell, as she stooped to see this strange, incomprehensible phenomenon. She tried to pick up one of the rubber caps. At her merest touch it crumbled to an impalpable white powder.

With a shuddering cry, the girl sprang back, terrified.

"Merciful Heavens!" she whispered. "What does all this mean?"

For a moment she stood there, her every power of thought, of motion, numbed. Breathing not, she only stared in a wild kind of cringing amazement as perhaps you might if you should see a dead man move.

Then she ran to the door. Out into the hall she peered, this way and that, down the dismantled corridor, up the wreckage of the stairs, which were all cumbered, like the office itself, with dust and webs and vermin.

Aloud she hailed: "Oh! Help, help, help!" No answer. Even the echoes flung back only dull, vacuous sounds that deepened her sense of awful and incredible isolation.

What? No noise of human life anywhere to be heard? None! No familiar hum of the metropolis now rose from what were swarming streets and miles on miles of habitations.

Instead, a blank, unbroken, leaden silence, that seemed part of the musty, choking atmosphere. A silence that weighed down on Beatrice like funeral palls.

Dumfounded by all this, and by the universal crumbling of every perishable thing, the girl ran, shuddering, back into the office. There in the dust her foot struck something hard.

She stooped; she caught it up and stared at it.

"My glass ink-well! What? Only such things remain?"

No dream, then, but reality! She knew at length that some catastrophe, incredibly vast, some disaster cosmic in the tragedy of its sweep, had desolated the world.

"Oh, my mother!" she cried. "My mother—dead? Dead, now, how long?"

She did not weep, but just stood there, cowering, a chill of anguished horror racking her. All at once her teeth began to chatter, her body to shake as with an ague.

For a moment, dazed and stunned, she remained there, not knowing which way to turn nor what to do. Then her terror-stricken gaze fell on the inner doorway, leading from her outer office to the inner one, the one where Stern had had his laboratory and his consultation room.

This door now hung, a few worm-eaten planks and splintered bits of wood, barely supported by the rusty hinges.

Toward it she staggered. She drew the sheltering mases of her hair about her, like a Godiva of another age; and to her eyes, womanlike, the hot tears mounted. As she went, she cried in a voice of horror:

"Mr. Stern! Oh, Mr. Stern! Are *you* dead, too? You can't me—it's too rightful!"

She reached the door. The mere touch of her outstretched hand disintegrated it. Down in a crumbling heap it fell. Thick dust bellied up in a cloud, through which a single sun-ray that entered the cobwebbed pane shot a radiant arrow.

Peering, hesitant, fearful of even greater terrors in that other room, Beatrice peered through this dust-haze. A sick foreboding of evil possessed her at thought of what she might find there—yet she was more afraid of what she knew lay there behind her.

For an instant she stood within the ruined doorway, her left hand resting on the moldy jamb. Then, with a cry, she started forward—a cry in which terror had given place to joy, despair to hope.

Forgotten now the fact that, save for the shrouding of her massy hair, she stood unclad. Forgotten the wreck, the desolation everywhere.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" she gasped.

There, in that inner office, half-rising from the wreck of many things that had been and were now no more, her startled eyes beheld the figure of a man—of Allan Stern!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He lived!

He peered at her with eyes that saw not, yet; toward her he groped a vague, unsteady hand.

He lived!

Not quite alone in this world-ruin, not all alone was she!

CHAPTER II

REALIZATION

THE joy in Beatrice's eyes gave way to poignant wonder as she gazed on him. Could this be he?

Yes, well she knew it was. She recognized him even through the grotesquery of his clinging rags, even behind the mask of a long, red, dusty beard and formidable mustache, even despite the wild and staring incoherence of his whole expression.

Yet how incredible the metamorphosis! There flashed to her a memory of this man, her other-time employer—keen and smooth-shaven, alert, well-dressed, self-centered, dominant. The master of a hundred complex problems, the directing mind of engineering works innumerable.

Faltering and uncertain now he stood there. Then, at the sound of the girl's voice, he staggered toward her with outflung hands. He stopped, and for a moment stared at her.

For he had had no time as yet to correlate his thoughts, to pull himself together.

And, while one's heart might throb ten times, Beatrice saw terror in his blinking, bloodshot eyes.

But almost at once the engineer got a mastery over himself. Even as Beatrice watched him, breathlessly, from the door, she saw his fear die out; she saw his courage well up fresh and strong.

It was almost as though something tangible were limning the man's soul upon his face. She thrilled at sight of him.

And though for a long moment no word was spoken, while the man and woman stood looking at each other like two children in some dread and unfamiliar attic, an understanding leaped between them.

Then, womanlike, instinctively as she breathed, the girl ran to him. Forgetful of every convention and of her disarray, she seized his hand. And in a voice that trembled till it broke she cried:

"What is it? What does all this mean? Tell me!"

She clung to him.

"Tell me the truth and save me! Is it *real?*"

Stern looked at her wonderingly. He smiled a strange, wan, mirthless smile.

He looked all about him. Then his lips moved, but for the moment no sound came.

He made another effort, this time successful.

"There, there," said he huskily, as though the dust and dryness of the innumerable years had got into his very voice. "There, now, don't be afraid.

"Something seems to have taken place here while—we've been asleep. What? What is it? I don't know yet. I'll find out. There's nothing to be alarmed about, at any rate."

"But—look!" She pointed at the hideous desolation.

"Yes, I see. But no matter. You're alive. I'm alive. That's two of us, anyhow. Maybe there are a lot more. We'll soon see. Whatever it may be, we'll win."

He turned and, trailing rags and streamers of rotten cloth that once had been a business suit, he waded through the confusion of wreckage on the floor, to the window.

If you have seen a weather-beaten scarecrow flapping in the wind, you have some notion of his outward guise. No tramp you ever laid eyes on could have offered so preposterous an appearance.

Down over his shoulders fell the matted, dusty hair. His tangled beard reached far below his waist. Even his eyebrows, naturally rather light, had grown to a heavy thatch above his eyes.

Except that he was not gray or bent, and that he still seemed to have kept the resilient force of vigorous manhood, you might have thought him some incredibly ancient Rip Van Winkle come to life upon that singular stage, there in the tower.

But he gave little time to introspection

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or the matter of his own appearance. With one quick gesture he swept away the shrouding tangle of webs, spiders, and dead flies that obscured the window. He peered out.

"Good heavens!" he cried, and started back.

The girl ran to him.

"What is it?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"Why, I don't know—yet. But this is something *big!* Something universal! It's—it's—no, no, you'd better not look out. Not just yet."

"I must know everything. Let me see."

Now she was at his side, and, like him, staring out into the clear sunshine, out over the vast expanses of the city.

A moment's utter silence fell. Quite clearly hummed the protest of an imprisoned fly in a web at the top of the window. The breathing of the man and woman sounded quick and loud.

"All—wrecked?" cried Beatrice. "But—then—"

"Wrecked? It looks that way," the engineer answered, holding his emotions in control with a strong effort. "Why not be frank about this? You'd better make up your mind at once to accept the very worst. I see no signs of anything else."

"The worst? You mean—"

"I mean just what we see out there. You can interpret it as well as I."

Again the silence while they looked, with emotions that could find no voicing in words. Instinctively the engineer passed an arm about the frightened girl and drew her close to him.

"And the last thing I remembered," she whispered, "was just—just after you'd finished dictating those Taunton Bridge specifications. I suddenly felt—oh, so sleepy! Only for a minute, I thought, I'd close my eyes and rest, and then—then—"

"This?"

She nodded.

"Same here," said he. "What the deuce can have struck us? Us and everybody, and everything? Talk about your problems! Lucky I'm sane and sound, and—and—"

He did not finish, but fell once more to studying the incomprehensible prospect.

Their view was toward the east, out over the river and the reaches of what had once upon a time been Long Island City and Brooklyn. As familiar a scene in the other days as could be possibly imagined. But now how altered an aspect greeted them!

"It's surely all wiped out, all gone, gone into ruins," said Stern slowly and carefully, weighing every word. "No hallucination about that." He swept the sky-line with his eyes, that now peered keenly out from beneath those bushy brows. Instinctively he brought his hand up to his breast. He started with surprise.

"What's this?" he cried. "Why! I—I've got a full yard of whiskers. My good Lord! Whiskers on *me?* And I used to say—"

He burst out laughing. He plucked at his beard with merriment that jangled horribly on the girl's tense nerves. Suddenly he grew serious. For the first time he seemed to take clear notice of his companion's disarray.

"Why, what a time it must have been!" he cried. "Here's some calculation all cut out for me, all right. But you can't go that way, Miss Kendrick. It won't do, you know. Got to have something to put on. Great Heavens, what a situation!"

He tried to peel off his remnant of a coat, but at the merest touch it tore to shreds and fell away. The girl restrained him.

"Never mind," she said, with quiet, modest dignity. "My hair protects me very well for the present. If you and I are all that's left of all the people in the world, this is no time for trifles."

He studied her a moment. Then he nodded, and grew very grave.

"Forgive me," he whispered, laying a hand on her shoulder. Once more he turned to the window and looked out.

"So, then, it's all gone?" he said, speaking as to himself. "Only a skyscraper standing here or there? And the bridges and the islands—all changed.

"Not a sign of life anywhere; not a sound; the forests growing thick among the ruins? A dead world if—if all the world

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is like this part of it! All dead, except *you* and *me!*"

In silence they stood there, striving to realize the full import of the catastrophe. And Stern, deep down in his heart, caught some glimmering insight of the future and was glad.

CHAPTER III

ON THE TOWER PLATFORM

SUDDENLY the girl started, rebelling against the evidence of her own senses, striving again to force upon herself the belief that, after all, that which she saw could not be so.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "This can't be true. It mustn't be. There's a mistake somewhere. This simply must be all an illusion, a dream.

"If the whole world's dead, how does it happen *we're* alive? How do we know it's dead? Can we see it all from here? Why, all we see is just a little segment of things. Perhaps if we could know the truth, look farther, and know—"

The man shook his head.

"I guess you'll find it's real enough," he answered, "no matter how far you look. But, just the same, it won't do any harm to extend our radius of observation.

"Come, let's go on up to the top of the tower, up to the observation-platform. The quicker we know all the available facts the better. Now, if I only had a telescope."

He thought hard for a moment, then turned and strode over to a heap of friable disintegration that lay where once his instrument case had stood, containing his surveying tools.

Down on his ragged knees he fell; his rotten shreds of clothing tore and ripped at every movement, like so much water-soaked paper.

A strange, hairy, dust-covered figure, he knelt there. Quickly he plunged his hands into the rubbish and began pawing it over and over with eager haste.

"Ah!" he cried with triumph. "Thank Heaven, brass and lenses haven't crumbled yet!"

He stood up again. In his hand the girl saw a peculiar telescope.

"My 'level,' see?" he exclaimed, holding it up to view. "The wooden tripod's long since gone. The fixtures that held it on won't bother me much.

"Neither will the spirit-glass on top. The main thing is that the telescope itself seems to be still intact. Now we'll see."

Speaking, he dusted off the eye-piece and the objective with a bit of rag from his coat-sleeve.

Beatrice noted that the brass tubes were all eaten and pitted with verdigris, but they still held firmly. And the lenses, when Stern had finished cleaning them, showed as bright and clear as ever.

"Come, now; come with me," he said.

Out through the doorway into the hall he made his way, while the girl followed. As she went she gathered her wondrous veil of hair more closely about her.

In this universal disorganization, this wreck of all the world, how little the conventions counted!

Together, picking their way up the broken stairs, where now the rust-bitten steel showed through the corroded stone and cement in a thousand places, they cautiously climbed.

Here, spider-webs thickly shrouded the way, and had to be brushed down. There, still more bats hung and chippered in protest as the intruders passed.

A pluffy little white owl blinked at them from a dark niche; and, well toward the top of the climb, they flushed up a score of mud-swallows which had ensconsed themselves comfortably along a broken balustrade.

At last, however, despite all unforseen incidents of this sort, they reached the upper platform, nearly a thousand feet above the earth.

Out through the relics of the revolving-door they crept, he leading, testing each foot of the way before the girl. They reached the narrow platform of red tiling that surrounded the tower.

Even here they saw with growing amazement that the hand of time and of this mad-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dening mystery had laid its heavy imprint.

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing. "What this all means we don't know yet. How long it's been we can't tell. But, to judge by the appearance up here, it's even longer than I thought. See, the very tiles are cracked and crumbling.

"Tilework is usually considered highly recalcitrant, but this is gone. There's grass growing in the dust that's settled between the tiles. And—why, here's a young oak that's taken root and forced a dozen slabs out of place!"

"The winds and birds have carried seeds up here, and acorns," she answered in an awed voice. "Think of the time that must have passed. Years and years."

"But tell me," and her brow wrinkled with a sudden wonder, "tell me how we've ever lived so long? I can't understand it.

"Not only have we escaped starvation, but we haven't frozen to death in all these bitter winters. How can that have happened?"

"Let it all go as suspended animation till we learn the facts, if we ever do," he replied, glancing about with keenest wonder.

"You know, of course, how toads have been known to live imbedded in rock for centuries? How fish, hard-frozen, have been brought to life again? Well—"

"But *we* are human beings."

"I know. Certain unknown natural forces, however, might have made no more of us than of non-mammalian and less highly organized creatures.

"Don't bother your head about these problems yet a while. On my word, we've got enough to do for the present without much caring about the how or why.

"All we definitely know is that some very long, undetermined period of time has passed, leaving us still alive. The rest can wait."

"How long a time do you judge it?" she anxiously inquired.

"Impossible to say at once. But it must have been something extraordinary. Probably far longer than either of us suspects.

"See, for example, the attrition of everything up here exposed to the weather." He pointed at the heavy stone railing. "See how *that* is wrecked, for instance."

A whole segment, indeed, had fallen inward. Its débris lay in confusion, blocking all the southern side of the platform.

The bronze bars, which Stern well remembered—two at each corner, slanting downward and bracing the rail—had now wasted to mere pockmarked shells of metal.

These had broken entirely and sagged wantonly awry with the displacement of the stone blocks, between which the vines and grasses had long been carrying on their destructive work.

"Look out!" Stern cautioned. "Don't lean against any of those stones." Firmly he held her back as she, eagerly inquisitive, started to advance toward the railing.

"Don't go anywhere near the edge. It may all be rotten and undermined, for anything we know. Keep back here, close to the wall."

Sharply, he inspected it a moment.

"Facing-stones are all pretty well gone," said he, "but so far as I can see, the steel frame isn't too bad. Putting everything together, I'll probably be able before long to make some sort of calculation of the date. But for now we'll have to call it 'X,' and let it go at that."

"The year X!" she whispered under her breath. "Good Heavens, am I as old as that?"

He made no answer, but only drew her to him protectingly, while all about them the warm summer wind swept onward to the sea, out over the sparkling expanses of the bay—alone unchanged in all that universal wreckage.

In the breeze the girl's heavy masses of hair stirred luringly. The man felt its silken caress on his half-naked shoulder, and in his ears the blood began to pound with strange insistence.

Quite gone now the daze and drowsiness of the first wakening. Stern did not even feel weak or shaken. On the contrary, never had life bounded more warmly, more fully, in his veins.

The presence of the girl set his heart throbbing heavily, but he bit his lip and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

restrained his every untoward thought.

Only his arm tightened a little about that warmly clinging body. Beatrice did not shrink from him. She needed his protection as never since the world began had woman needed man.

To her it seemed that, come what might, his strength and comfort could not fail. And, despite everything, she could not—for the moment—find unhappiness within her heart.

Quite vanished now, even in those brief minutes since their awakening, was all consciousness of their former relationship—employer and employed.

The self-contained, courteous, yet unapproachable, engineer had disappeared.

Now, through all the extraneous disguises of his outer self, there lived and breathed just a man, a young man, thewed with the vigor of his plenitude. All else had been swept clean away by this great change.

The girl was different, too. Was this strong woman, eager-eyed and brave, the quiet, low-voiced stenographer he remembered, busy only with her machine, her file-boxes, and her carbon-copies? Stern dared not realize the transmutation. He ventured hardly to fringe it in his thoughts.

To divert his wonderings and to ease a situation which oppressed him, he began adjusting the "level" telescope to his eye.

With his back planted firmly against the tower, he studied a wide section of the dead and buried world so very far below them. With astonishment he cried:

"It *is* true, Beatrice! Everything's swept clean away. Nothing left, nothing at all—no sign of life!

"As far as I can reach with these lenses, universal ruin. We're all alone in this whole world, just you and I—and everything belongs to us!"

"Everything—all ours?"

"Everything! Even the future—the future of the human race!"

Suddenly he felt her tremble at his side. He looked down at her, a great new tenderness possessing him. He saw that tears were forming in her eyes.

Then Beatrice pressed both hands to her face and bowed her head. Filled with strange emotions, the man watched her for a moment.

Then in silence, realizing the uselessness of any words, knowing that in this monstrous Ragnarök of all humanity no ordinary relations of life could bear either cogency or meaning, he took her in his arms.

And there alone with her, far above the ruined world, high in the pure air of mid-heaven, he comforted the girl with words till then unthought-of and unknown to him.

CHAPTER IV

THE CITY OF DEATH

PRESENTLY Beatrice grew calmer. For though grief and terror still weighed upon her soul, she realized that this was no fit time to yield to any weakness—now when a thousand things were pressing for accomplishment, if their own lives, too, were not presently to be snuffed out in all this universal death.

"Come, come," said Stern reassuringly. "I want you, too, to get a complete idea of what has happened. From now on you must know all, share all, with me." And, taking her by the hand, he led her along the crumbling and uncertain platform.

Together, very cautiously, they explored the three sides of the platform still unchoked by ruins.

Out over the incredible mausoleum of civilization they peered. Now and again they aided their vision with the telescope.

Nowhere, as he had said, was any slightest sign of life to be discerned. Nowhere a thread of smoke arose; nowhere a sound that echoed upward.

Dead lay the city, between its rivers, whereon now no sail glinted in the sunlight, no tug puffed vehemently with plumy jets of steam, no liner idled at anchor or nosed its slow course out to sea.

The Jersey shore, the Palisades, the Bronx, and Long Island all lay buried in dense forests of conifers and oak, with only here or there some skeleton mockery of a steel structure jutting through.

The islands in the harbor, too, were thick-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ly overgrown. With a gasp of dismay and pain, Beatrice pointed out the fact that Liberty no longer held her bronze torch aloft. Save for a black, misshapen mass protruding through the tree-tops, Miss Liberty, the huge gift of France, was no more.

Fringing the water-front, all the way round, the mournful remains of the docks and piers lay in a mere sodden jumble of decay, with an occasional hulk sunk alongside.

Even over these wrecks of liners, vegetation was growing rank and green. All the wooden ships, barges, and schooners had utterly vanished.

The telescope showed only a stray, lolling mast of steel, here or yonder, thrusting up from the desolation, like a mute appealing hand raised to a Heaven that responded not.

"See," remarked Stern, "up-town almost all the buildings seem to have crumpled in upon themselves, or to have fallen outward into the streets. What an inconceivable tangle of wreckage those streets must be!

"And, do you notice the park hardly shows at all? Everything's so overgrown with trees you can't tell where it begins or ends. Nature has got her revenge at last, on man."

"The universal claim, made real," said Beatrice. "Those rather clearer lines of green, I suppose, must be the larger streets. See how the avenues stretch away and away, like ribbons of green velvet.

"Everywhere that roots can hold at all, Mother Nature has set up her flags again. Listen! What's that?"

A moment they listened intently. Up to them, from very far, rose a wailing cry, tremulous, long-drawn, formidable.

"Oh! Then there *are* people, after all?" faltered the girl, grasping Stern's arm.

He laughed.

"No, hardly," answered he. "I see you don't know the wolf-cry. I didn't, till I heard it in the Hudson Bay country, last winter—that is, last winter, plus X. Not very pleasant, is it?"

"Wolves! Then—there are—"

"Why not? Probably all sorts of game on the island now. Why shouldn't there be? All in Mother Nature's stock-in-trade, you know.

"But come, come, don't let that worry you. We're safe, for the present. Time enough to consider hunting later. Let's creep around here to the other side of the tower, and see what we can see."

Silently she agreed. Together they reached the southern part of the platform, making their way as far as the jumbled rocks of the fallen railing would permit.

Very carefully they progressed, fearful every moment lest the support break beneath them and hurl them down along the sloping side of the pinnacle to death.

"Look!" said Stern, pointing. "That very long green line there used to be Broadway. Quite a respectable forest of Arden now, isn't it?" He swept his hand far outward.

"See those steel cages, those tiny, far-off ones with daylight shining through? And the bridges, look at those!"

She shivered at the desolate sight. Only the towers of the Brooklyn Bridge were standing.

The watchers, two isolated castaways on their islands in the sea of uttermost desolation, beheld a dragging mass of wreckage that drooped from these towers on either shore, down into the sparkling flood.

The other bridges, newer and stronger far, still remained standing. But even from that distance Stern could quite plainly see, without the telescope, that the Williamsburg Bridge had "buckled" downward, and that the farther span of the Blackwell's Island Bridge was in ruinous disrepair.

"How horrible, how ghastly is all this waste and ruin!" thought the engineer. "Yet, even in their overthrow, how wonderful are the works of man!"

A vast wonder seized him as he stood there gazing; a fierce desire to rehabilitate all this wreckage, to set it right, to start the wheels of the world-machinery running once more.

At the thought of his own powerlessness a bitter smile curled his lips.

Beatrice seemed to share something of his wonder.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Can it be possible," she whispered, "that you and I are really like Macaulay's lone watcher of the world-wreck on London Bridge?

"That we are actually seeing the thing so often dreamed of by prophets and poets? That 'All this mighty heart is lying still,' at last—forever? The heart of the world, never to beat again?"

He made no answer, except to shake his head; but his thoughts were running fast.

So then, could he and Beatrice, just they two, be in stern reality the sole survivors of the entire human race? That race for whose material welfare he had, once on a time, done such tremendous work?

Could they be destined, he and she, to witness the closing chapter in the long, painful, glorious Book of Evolution? He shivered slightly and glanced around.

Till he could adjust his reason to the facts, could learn the truth and weigh it, he knew he must not analyze too closely; he felt he must try not to think. For that way lay madness!

Beatrice gazed far out.

The sun, declining, shot a broad glory all across the sky. Purple and gold and crimson lay the light-bands over the breast of the Hudson.

Dark blue the shadows streamed across the ruined city with its crowding forests, its blank-staring windows and sagging walls, its thousands of gaping vacancies, where wood and stone and brick had crumbled down. The city where once the tides of human life had ebbed and flowed, roaring resistlessly.

High overhead drifted a few rosy clouds, part of that changeless nature which alone did not repel or mystify these two beleaguered waifs, these chance survivors, this man, this woman, left alone together by the hand of fate.

They were dazed, fascinated by the splendor of that sunset over a world devoid of human life, for the moment giving up all efforts to judge or understand.

Stern and his mate peered closer, down at the interwoven jungles of Union Square, the leafy frond-masses that marked the one-time course of Twenty-third Street, the forest in Madison Square.

They heard their own hearts beat. The intake of their breath sounded strangely loud. Above them, on a broken cornice, some resting swallows twittered.

All at once the girl spoke.

"See the Flatiron Building over there!" she said. "What a hideous wreck!"

She took the telescope from Stern, adjusted it, and gazed minutely at the shattered pile of stone and metal.

Blotched as with leprosy stood the walls, whence many hundreds of blocks had fallen into Broadway, forming a vast moraine that for some distance choked that thoroughfare.

In numberless places the steel frame peered through. The whole roof had caved in, crushing down the upper stories, of which only a few sparse upstanding metal beams remained.

The girl's gaze was directed at a certain spot which she knew well.

"Oh, I can even see into some of the offices on the eighteenth floor!" cried she. "There; look!" And she pointed. "That one near the front! I—I used to know—"

She broke off short. In her trembling hands the telescope sank. Stern saw that she was very pale.

"Take me down!" she whispered. "I can't stand it any longer. I can't, possibly! The sight of that wrecked office! Let's go down where I can't see it!"

Gently, as though she had been a frightened child, Stern led her round the platform to the doorway, then down the crumbling stairs and so to the wreckage and dust-strewn confusion of what had been his office.

And there, his hand upon her shoulder, he urged her to be courageous.

"Listen now, Beatrice," said he. "Let's try to reason this thing out together; let's try to solve this problem like two intelligent human beings.

"Just what happened, we don't know; we can't know yet a while, till I investigate. We don't even know what year this is.

"Don't know whether anybody else is still alive, anywhere in the world. But we can find out, after we've made provision for

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the immediate present and formed some rational plan of life.

"If all the rest are gone, swept away, wiped out clean like figures on a slate, then why we should have happened to survive whatever it was that struck the earth, is still a riddle far beyond our comprehension."

Here he raised her face to his, noble, despite all its grotesque disfigurements. He looked into her eyes as though to read the very soul of her, to judge whether she could share this fight, could brave this coming struggle.

"All these things may yet be answered. Once I get the proper data for this series of phenomena, I can find the solution.

"Some vast world-duty may be ours, far greater, infinitely more vital than anything that either of us has ever dreamed. It's not our place, now, to mourn or fear. Rather it is to read this mystery, to meet it and to conquer."

Through her tears the girl smiled up at him, trustingly, confidingly. And in the last declining rays of the sun that glinted through the window-pane, her eyes were very beautiful.

CHAPTER V

EXPLORATION

CAME now the evening, as they sat and talked together, talked long and earnestly, there within that ruined place. They were too eager for some knowledge of the truth to feel hunger or to think of the conventions of clothing.

Chairs they had none, nor even so much as a broom to clean the floor with. But Stern, first-off, had wrenched a marble slab from the stairway.

And with this plane of stone still strong enough to serve, he had scraped all one corner of the office floor free of rubbish. This gave them a preliminary camping-place wherein to take their bearings and discuss what must be done.

"So then," the engineer was saying as the dusk grew deeper, "we'll apparently have to make this building our headquarters for a while.

"As nearly as I can figure, this is about what must have happened. Some sudden, deadly, numbing plague or cataclysm must have struck the earth, long, long ago.

"It may have been an almost instantaneous onset of some new and highly fatal micro-organism, propagating with such marvelous rapidity that it swept the world clean in a day—doing its work before any resistance could be organized or thought of.

"Again, some poisonous gas may have developed, either from a fissure in the earth's crust, or otherwise. Other hypotheses are possible, but of what practical value are they now?

"We only know that here, in this uppermost office of the Tower, working late, you and I have somehow escaped with only a long period of completely suspended animation. How long? God above knows! That's a query I can't even guess the answer to as yet."

"Well, to judge by all the changes," Beatrice suggested thoughtfully, "it can't have been less than a hundred years. Great Heavens!" and she burst into a little satiric laugh. "Am I a hundred and twenty-four years old? Think of that!"

"You underestimate," Stern answered. "But no matter about the time question for the present; we can't solve it now.

"Neither can we solve the other problem about Europe and Asia and all the rest of the world. Whether London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, and every other city, every other land, has shared this fate, we simply don't know.

"All we can have is a feeling of strong probability that life, human life I mean, is everywhere extinct—except right here in this room.

"Otherwise—don't you see?—men would have made their way back here again, back to New York, where all these incalculable treasures seem to have perished, and—"

He broke off short. Again, far off, they heard a faint re-echoing roar. For a moment they both sat speechless. What could it be? Some distant wall toppling down? A hungry beast scenting its prey? They could not tell. But Stern smiled.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I guess," said he, "guns will be about the first thing I'll look for, after food. There ought to be good hunting down in the jungles of Fifth Avenue and Broadway.

"You shoot, of course? No? Well, I'll soon teach you. Lots of things both of us have got to learn now. No end of them."

He rose from his place on the floor, went over to the window and stood for a minute peering out into the gloom. Then suddenly he turned.

"What's the matter with me, anyhow?" he exclaimed with irritation. "What right have I to be staying here, theorizing, when there's work to do? I ought to be busy this very minute.

"In some way or other I've got to find food, clothing, tools, arms—a thousand things. And above all, water. And here I've been speculating about the past, fool that I am."

"You—you aren't going to leave me—not tonight?" faltered the girl.

Stern seemed not to have heard her, so strong the urge for action lay upon him now. He began to pace the floor, sliding and stumbling through the rubbish, a singular figure in his tatters, and with his patriarchal hair and beard. A figure dimly seen by the faint light that still gloomed through the window.

"In all that wreckage down below," said he, as though half to himself, "in all that vast congeries of ruin which once was called New York, surely enough must still remain intact for our small needs. Enough till we can reach the land, the country, and raise food of our own."

"Don't go now!" pleaded Beatrice. She, too, stood up, and now she stretched her hands to him. "Don't, please! We can get along some way or other till morning. At least, I can!"

"No, no, it isn't right. Down in the shops and stores, who knows but we might find—"

"But you're unarmed. And in the streets—in the forest, rather—"

"Listen," he commanded rather abruptly, "this is no time for hesitating or for weakness. I know you'll stand your share of all that we must suffer, dare, and do together.

"Some way or other I've got to make you comfortable. I've got to locate food and drink immediately. Got to get my bearings. Why, do you think I'm going to let you, even for one night, go fasting and thirsty, sleep on bare cement, and all that sort of thing?

"If so, you're mistaken! No, you must spare me for an hour or two. Inside of that time I ought to make a beginning!"

"A whole hour?"

"Two would probably be nearer it. I promise to be back inside of that time."

"But," and her voice quivered just a trifle, "but suppose some wolf or bear—"

"Oh, I'm not quite so foolhardy as all that!" he retorted. "I'm not going to venture outside till tomorrow. My idea is that I can find at least a few essentials right here in this building.

"It's a city in itself—or was. Offices, stores, shops, everything right here together in a lump. It can't possibly take me very long to go down and rummage out something for your comfort.

"Now that the first shock and surprise of our awakening are over, we can't go on in this way, you know—h-m!—dressed in—well, such exceedingly primitive garb."

Silently she looked at his dim figure in the dusk. Then she stretched out her hand.

"I'll go, too," she said quite simply.

"You'd better stay. It's safer here."

"No, I'm going."

"But if we run into dangers?"

"Never mind. Take me with you."

He came over to her. He took her hand. In silence he pressed it. Thus for a moment they stood. Then, arousing himself to action, he said: "First of all, a light."

"A light? How can you make a light? Why, there isn't a match left anywhere in this whole world."

"I know, but there are other things. Probably my chemical flasks and vials aren't injured. Glass is practically imperishable. And if I'm not mistaken, the bottles must be lying somewhere in that rubbish heap over by the window."

He left her wondering, and knelt among the litter. For a while he silently delved

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the triturated bits of punky wood and rust-red metal that now represented the remains of his chemical cabinet.

All at once he exclaimed: "Here's one! And here's another. This certainly is luck. H-m! Shouldn't wonder if I got almost all of them back."

One by one he found a score of thick, ground-glass vials. Some were broken, probably by the shock when they and the cabinet had fallen, but a good many still remained intact.

Among these were the two essential ones. By the last dim ghost of a light through the window, and by the sense of touch, Stern was able to make out the engraved symbols "P" and "S" on these bottles.

"Phosphorus and sulfur," he commented. "Well, what more could I reasonably ask? Here's alcohol, too, hermetically sealed. Not too bad, eh?"

While the girl watched with wondering admiration, Stern thought hard a moment. Then he set to work.

First he took a piece of the corroded metal framework of the cabinet, a steel strip about eighteen inches long, frail in places, but still sufficiently strong to serve his purpose.

Tearing off some rags from his coat-sleeve, he wadded them together into a ball as big as his fist. Around this ball he twisted the metal strip, so that it formed at once a holder and a handle for the rag-mass.

With considerable difficulty he worked the glass stopper out of the alcohol bottle, and with the fluid saturated the rags. Then, on a clear bit of floor, he spilled out a small quantity of the phosphorus and sulfur.

"This beats getting fire by friction all hollow," he cheerfully remarked. "I've tried that, too, and I guess it's only in books a white man ever succeeds at it. But this way, you see, it's simplicity itself."

Very moderate friction, with a bit of wood from the wreckage of the door, sufficed to set the phosphorus ablaze. Stern heaped on a few tiny lumps of sulfur. Then, coughing as the acrid fumes arose from the sputter of blue flame, he applied the alcohol-soaked torch.

Instantly a puff of fire shot up, colorless and clear, throwing no very satisfactory light, yet capable of dispelling the thickest of the gloom.

The blaze showed Stern's eager face, long-bearded and dusty, as he bent over this crucial experiment.

The girl, watching closely, felt a strange new thrill of confidence and solace. Some realization of the engineer's resourcefulness came to her, and in her heart she had confidence that, though the whole wide world had crumpled into ruin, yet he would find a way to smooth her path, to be a strength and refuge for her.

But Stern had no time for any but matters of intensest practicality. He rose from the floor, holding the flambeau in one hand, the bottle of alcohol in the other.

"Come now," he said, and raised the torch on high to light her way. "You're still determined to go?"

For an answer she nodded. Her eyes gleamed by the uncanny light.

And so, together, he leading out of the room and along the wrecked hall, they started on their trip of exploration out into the unknown.

CHAPTER VI

TREASURE-TROVE

NEVER before had either of them realized just what the meaning of forty-eight stories might be. For all their memories of this height were associated with smooth-sliding elevators that had whisked them up as though the tremendous had been the merest trifle.

This night, however, what with the broken stairs, the débris-cumbered hallways, the lurking darkness which the torch could hardly hold back from swallowing them, they came to a clear understanding of the problem.

Every few minutes the flame burned low and Stern had to drop on more alcohol, holding the bottle high above the flame to avoid explosion.

Long before they had compassed the dis-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tance to the ground floor the girl lagged with weariness and shrank with nameless fears.

Each black doorway that yawned along their path seemed ominous with memories of life that had perished there, of death that now reigned all-supreme.

Each corner, every niche and crevice, breathed out the spirit of the past and of the mystic tragedy which in so brief a time had wiped the human race from earth, "as a a mother wipes the milky lips of her child."

And Stern, though he said little except to guide Beatrice and warn her of unusual difficulties, felt the somber magic of the place. No poet, he; only a man of hard and practical details.

Yet he realized that, were he dowered with the faculty, here lay matter for an Epic of Death such as no Homer ever dreamed, no Virgil ever could have penned.

Now and then, along the corridors and down the stairways, they chanced on curious little piles of dust, scattered at random in fantastic shapes.

These for a few minutes puzzled Stern, till stooping, he stirred one with his hand. Something he saw there made him start back with a stifled exclamation.

"What is it?" cried the girl, startled.

But he, realizing the nature of his discovery—for he had seen a human incisor tooth, gold-filled, there in the odd little heap—straightened up quickly and assumed to smile.

"It's nothing, nothing at all," he answered. "Come, we haven't got any time to waste. If we're going to provide ourselves with even a few necessaries before the alcohol's all gone, we've got to be at work."

And onward, downward, ever farther and farther, he led her through the dark maze of ruin, which did not even echo to their barefoot tread.

Like disheveled wraiths they passed, soundlessly, through eerie labyrinths and ways which might have served as types of Coleridge's "caverns measureless to man," so utterly drear they stretched out in their ghostly desolation.

At length, after an eternal time of weariness and labor, they managed to make their way down into the ruins of the famous and once beautiful arcade which had formerly run from Madison Avenue to the square.

"Oh, how horrible!" gasped Beatrice, shrinking, as they clambered down the stairs and emerged into this scene of chaos, darkness, death.

Where once the arcade had stretched its path of light and life and beauty, of wealth and splendor, like an epitome of civilization all gathered in that constricted space, the little light disclosed stark horror.

Feeble as a will-o'-the-wisp in that enshrouding dark, the torch now showed only hints of things. Here a fallen pillar, there a shattered mass of wreckage where a huge section of the ceiling had fallen. Yonder a gaping aperture left by the disintegration of a wall.

Through all this rubbish and confusion, over and through a score of the little dust-piles which Stern had so carefully avoided explaining to Beatrice, they climbed and waded, and with infinite pains slowly advanced.

"What we need is more light!" exclaimed the engineer presently. "We've got to have a bonfire here!"

And before long he had collected a considerable pile of wood, ripped from doorways and window-casings of the arcade. This he set fire to, in the middle of the floor.

Soon a dull, wavering glow began to paint itself upon the walls, and to fling the comrades' shadows, huge and weird, in dancing mockery across the desolation.

Strangely enough, many of the large plate-glass windows lining the arcade still stood intact. They glittered with the uncanny reflections of the fire as the man and woman slowly made way down the passage.

"See!" exclaimed Stern, pointing. "See all these ruined shops? Probably almost everything is worthless. But there must be some things left that we can use.

"Think of the millions in real money, gold and silver, in the safes all over the city—in the banks and vaults! Millions! Billions!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Jewels, diamonds; wealth simply inconceivable. Yet now a good water supply, some bread, meat, coffee, salt, and so on, a couple of beds, a gun or two and some ordinary tools would outweigh them all."

"Clothes, too," the girl suggested. "Plain cotton cloth is worth ten million dollars an inch now."

"Right," answered Stern, gazing about him with wonder. "And I offer a bushel of diamonds for a razor and a pair of scissors." Grimly he smiled as he stroked his enormous beard.

"But come, this won't do. There'll be plenty of time to look around and discuss things in the morning. Let's get busy!"

Thus began their search for a few prime necessities of life, there in that charnal-house of civilization, by the dull reflections of the firelight and the pallid torch glow.

Though they forced their way into ten or twelve of the arcade shops, they found no clothing, no blankets or fabric of any kind that would serve to cover them or to sleep upon. Everything at all in the nature of cloth had either sunk back into moldering annihilation or had at best grown far too fragile to be of the slightest service.

They found, however, a furrier's shop, and this they entered eagerly.

A few warped fragments of skins still hung from rusted metal hooks, moth-eaten, riddled with holes, ready to crumble at the merest touch.

"There's nothing in any of these to help us," judged Stern. "But maybe we might find something else in here."

Carefully they searched the littered place, all dust and horrible disarray, which made sad mockery of the gold-leaf sign still visible on the window: "Adèle, Importer. All the Latest Novelties."

On the floor Stern discovered three more of those little dust-middens which meant human bodies. Pitiful remnants of an extinct race, of unknown people in the long ago. What had he now in common with them? The remains did not even inspire repugnance in him.

All at once Beatrice uttered a cry of startled gladness.

"Look here! A storage chest!"

True enough, there stood a cedar box, all seamed and cracked and bulging, yet still retaining a semblance of its original shape.

The copper bindings and the lock were still quite plainly to be seen, as the engineer held the torch close, though green and corroded with incredible age.

One effort of Stern's powerful arms sufficed to tip the chest quite over. As it fell it burst, and disintegrated into a mass of pulverized, worm-eaten splinters.

Out rolled furs, many and many of them, black, and yellow, and striped—the pelts of the grizzly, of the leopard, the cheetah, the royal bengal himself.

"Hurray!" shouted the man, catching up first one, then another, and still a third. "Almost intact. A little imperfection here and there doesn't matter. Now we've got clothes and a bed—beds, I mean.

"What's that? Yes, maybe they are a trifle warm for this season of the year, but this is no time to be particular. See, how do you like *that?*"

As he spoke, he flung the tiger-skin over the girl's shoulders.

"Magnificent!" he judged, standing back a pace or two and holding up the torch to see her better. "When I find you a big gold pin or clasp to fasten that at the throat, you'll make a picture of another and more splendid Boadicea!"

He tried to laugh at his own words, but merriment seemed out of place there, and with such a subject. For the woman, clad this way, had suddenly assumed a wild, barbaric beauty.

Bright gleamed her gray eyes by the light of the flambeau; limpid, and deep, and earnest, they looked at Stern. Her wonderful hair, shaken out in bewildering masses over the striped, tawny savagery of the robe, made colorful contrasts, barbarous, seductive.

Half hidden, the woman's perfect body, beautiful as that of a wood-nymph or a pagan dryad, roused atavistic passions in the engineer.

He dared speak no other word for the moment, but bent beside the shattered chest

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again and fell to looking over all the furs.

A polar-bear skin attracted his attention, and this he chose. Then, with it slung across his shoulder, he stood up.

"Come," said he, steadying his voice with an effort, "come, we must be going now. Our light won't hold out very much longer. We've got to find food and drink before the alcohol's all gone; got to look out for practical affairs, whatever happens. Well, let's be going."

Fortune favored them.

In the wreck of a small fancy grocer's booth down toward the end of the arcade, they came upon a stock of goods in glass jars.

All the tinned foods had long since perished, but the impermeable glass seemed to have preserved fruits and vegetables of the finer sort, and chipped beef and the like, in a state of perfect soundness.

Best of all, they discovered the remains of a case of mineral water. The case had crumbled to dust, but fourteen bottles of water were still intact.

"Pile three or four of these into my fur robe here," directed Stern. "No, a few of the other jars—that's right. Tomorrow we'll come down and clean up the whole stock. But we've got enough for now.

"We'd best be getting back up the stairs again," said he. And so they started.

"Are you going to leave that fire burning?" asked the girl, as they passed the middle of the arcade.

"Yes. It can't do any harm. Nothing to catch here; only old metal and cement. Besides, it would take too much time and labor to put it out."

They abandoned the gruesome place and began the long, exhausting climb.

It must have taken them an hour and a half at least to reach their aerie. They found their strength taxed to the utmost.

Before they were much more than halfway up, the ultimate drop of alcohol had been burned.

The last few hundred feet had to be made by slow, laborious feeling, aided only by such dim reflections of the gibbous moon as glimmered through a window, cobweb-hung, or through some break in the walls.

At length, however—for all things have an end—breathless and spent, they found their refuge. And soon after that, clad in their savage robes, they ate.

Allan Stern, consulting engineer, and Beatrice Kendrick, stenographer, now king and queen of the whole wide world domain (as they feared) sat together by a little blaze of punky wood fragments that flickered on the eroded floor.

They ate with their fingers and drank out of the bottles, without apology. Strange were their speculations, their wonderings, their plans—now discussed specifically, now half-voiced by a mere word that thrilled them both with sudden, poignant emotion.

And so an hour passed, and night deepened toward the birth of another day. The fire burned low and died, for they had little to replenish it with.

Down sank the moon, her pale light dimming as she went, her faint illumination wanly creeping across the disordered, wrack-strewn floor.

And at length Stern, in the outer office, Beatrice in the other, they wrapped themselves within their furs and laid them down to sleep.

Despite the age-long trance from which they both had but so recently emerged, a strange lassitude weighed on them.

Yet long after Beatrice had lost herself in dreams, Stern lay and thought strange thoughts, yearning and eager thoughts, there in the impenetrable gloom.

CHAPTER VII

THE OUTER WORLD

BEFORE daybreak the engineer was up again, and active. Now that he faced the light of morning, with a thousand difficult practical problems closing in on every hand, he put aside his softer moods, his visions and desires, and—like the scientific man he was—addressed himself to the urgent matters in hand.

"The girl's safe enough alone, here, for a while," thought he, looking in upon her where she lay, calm as a child, folded

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

within the clinging masses of the tiger-skin.

"I must be out and away for two or three hours, at the very least. I hope she'll sleep till I get back. If not—what then?"

He pondered a moment; then, coming over to the charred remnants of last night's fire, chose a bit of burnt wood. With this he scrawled in large, rough letters on a fairly smooth stretch of the wall:

Back soon. All O. K. Don't worry.

Then, turning, he set out on the long, painful descent again to the earth-level.

Garish now, and doubly terrible, since seen with more than double clearness by the graying dawn, the world-ruin seemed to him.

Strong of body and of nerve as he was, he could not help but shudder at the numberless traces of sudden and pitiless death which everywhere met his gaze.

Everywhere lay those dust-heaps, with here and there a tooth, a ring, a bit of jewelry showing. Everywhere he saw them, all the way down the stairs, in every room and office that he peered into, and in the time-ravished confusion of the arcade.

But this was scarcely the time for reflections of any sort. Life called, and labor, and duty; not mourning for the dead world, nor even wonder or pity at the tragedy which had so mysteriously befallen.

And as the man made his way over and through the universal wreckage, he took counsel with himself.

"First of all, water!" he thought. "We can't depend on the bottled supply. Of course, there's the Hudson; but it's brackish, if not downright salt. I've got to find some fresh and pure supply, close at hand. That's the prime necessity of life.

"What with the canned stuff, and such game as I can kill, there's bound to be food enough for a while. But a good water-supply we must have, and at once."

Yet, prudent rather for the sake of Beatrice than for his own, he decided that he ought not to issue out, unarmed, into this new and savage world, of which he had as yet no very definite knowledge. And for a while he searched, hoping to find some weapon or other.

"I've got to have an ax, first of all," said he. "That's man's first need, in any wilderness. Where shall I find one?"

He thought a moment.

"Ah! In the basements! Maybe I can locate an engine-room, a store-room, or something of that sort. There's sure to be tools of some sort, in a place like that." And, laying off the bearskin, he prepared to explore the regions under the ground-level.

He used more than half an hour, through devious ways and hard labor, to make his way to the desired spot. He could not find the ancient stairway, leading down.

But by clambering down one of the elevator shafts, digging toes and fingers into the crevices in the metal framework and the cracks in the concrete, he managed at last to reach a vaulted sub-cellar, festooned with webs, damp, noisome and obscure.

Considerable light glimmered in from a broken sidewalk-grating above, and through a gaping, jagged hole near one end of the cellar, beneath which lay a badly-broken stone.

The engineer figured that this block had fallen from the Tower, penetrated the building and come to rest only here; and this awoke him to a new sense of ever-present peril. At any moment of the night or day, some such mishap was liable.

"Eternal vigilance!" he whispered to himself. Then, dismissing useless fears, he set about the task in hand.

By the dim illumination from above, he was able to take cognizance of the musty-smelling place, which, on the whole, was in a better state of repair than the arcade. The first cellar yielded nothing of value to him, but, making his way through a low vaulted door, he chanced into what must have been one of the smaller, auxiliary engine-rooms.

This, he found, contained a battery of four dynamos, a small seepage-pump, and a crumbling marble switch-board with part of the wiring still comparatively intact.

At sight of all this valuable machinery scaled and pitted with rust, Stern's brows

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contracted with a feeling akin to pain. The engineer loved mechanism of all sorts; its care and use had been his life.

And now these mournful relics, strange as that may seem, affected him more strongly than the little heaps of dust which marked the spots where human beings had fallen in sudden, inescapable death.

Yet even so, he had no time for musing.

"Tools!" cried he, peering about the dim-lit vault. "Tools—I must have some. Till I find tools, I'm helpless!"

Search as he might, he discovered no ax in the place, but in place of it he unearthed a sledge-hammer. Though corroded, it was still quite serviceable. Oddly enough, the oak handle was almost intact.

"Kyanized wood, probably," he reflected, as he laid the sledge to one side and began delving into a bed of dust that had evidently been a work-bench. "Ah! And here's a chisel! A spanner, too! A heap of rusty old wire nails!"

Delightedly he examined these treasures.

"They're worth more to me," he exulted, "than all the gold between here and what's left of San Francisco!"

He found nothing more of value in the litter. Everything else was rusted beyond use. So, having convinced himself that nothing else remained, he gathered up his finds and started back whence he had come.

After some quarter-hour of hard labor, he managed to transport everything up into the arcade.

"Now for a glimpse of the outer world," said he.

Gripping the sledge well in hand, he made his way through the confused nexus of ruin. Disguised as everything now was, fallen and disjointed, moldering, blighted by age incalculable, still the man recognized many familiar features.

Here, he recalled, the telephone-booths had been; there, the information-desk. He remembered the little curved counter where once a man in uniform had stood.

Counter now was dust; the man only a crumble of fine, grayish powder. Stern shivered slightly, and pressed on.

As he approached the outer air, he noticed that many a grassy tuft and creeping vine had rooted in the pavement of the arcade, prying up the marble slabs and cracking the once magnificent floor.

The doorway itself was almost choked by a tremendous Norway pine which had struck root close to the building, and now insolently blocked that way where, other-time, many thousand men and women every day had come and gone.

But Stern clambered out past this obstacle, testing the floor with his sledge, as he went, lest he fall through an unseen weak spot into the depths of coal-cellars below. And presently he reached the outer air, unharmed.

"But—but, the sidewalk!" he cried, amazed. "The street—the Square? Where are they?" And in astonishment he stopped, staring.

The view from the tower, though it had told him something of the changes wrought, had given him no adequate conception of their magnitude.

He had expected some remains of human life to show upon the earth, some semblance of the metropolis to remain in the street. But no, nothing was there; nothing at all on the ground to show that he was in the heart of a city.

He could, indeed, catch glimpses of a building here or there. Through the tangled thickets that grew close up to the age-worn walls of the Metropolitan, he could make out a few bits of tottering construction on the south side of what had been Twenty-third Street.

But of the street itself, no trace remained—no pavement, no sidewalk, no curb. And even so near and so conspicuous an object as the wreck of the Flatiron Building was now entirely concealed by the dense forest.

Soil had formed thickly over all the surface. Huge oaks and pines flourished there as confidently as though in the heart of the Maine forest, crowding ash and beech for room.

Under the man's feet, even as he stood close by the building—which was thickly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

overgrown with ivy and with ferns and bushes rooted in the crannies—the pine-needles bent in deep, pungent beds.

Birch, maple, poplar and all the natives of the American woods shouldered each other lustily. By the state of the fresh young leaves, just bursting their sheaths, Stern knew the season was mid-May.

Through the wind-swayed branches, little flickering patches of morning sunlight met his gaze, as they played and quivered on the forest moss or over the sere pine-spills.

Even upon the huge, square stones which here and there lay in disorder, and which Stern knew must have fallen from the tower, the moss grew very thick; and more than one such block had been rent by frost and growing things.

"How long has it been, great Heavens! How long?" cried the engineer, a sudden fear creeping into his heart. For this, the reasserted dominance of nature, bore in on him with more appalling force than anything he had yet seen.

He looked about him, trying to get his bearings in these strange surroundings.

"Why," he said, quite slowly, "it's—it's just as though some cosmic jester, all-powerful, had scooped up the fragments of a ruined city and tossed them pell-mell into the core of the Adirondacks! It's horrible—ghastly—incredible!"

Dazed and awed, he stood as in a dream, a strange figure with his mane of hair, his flaming, trailing beard, his rags (for he had left the bear-skin in the arcade), his bare and muscular arm, knotted as he held the sledge over his shoulder.

Well might he have been a savage of old times; one of the early barbarians of Britain, perhaps, peering in wonder at the ruins of some deserted Roman camp.

The chatter of a squirrel high up somewhere in the branches of an oak, recalled him to his wits. Down came spiralling a few bits of bark and acorn-shell, quite in the old familiar way.

Farther off among the woods, a robin's throaty morning notes drifted to him on the glorous breeze. A wren, surprisingly tame, chippered busily. It hopped about, not ten feet from him, entirely fearless.

Stern realized that it was now seeing a man for the first time in its life, and that it had no fear. His bushy brows contracted as he watched the little brown body jumping from twig to twig in the pine above him.

He drew a deep, full breath. Higher, still higher he raised his head. Far through the leafy screen he saw the overbending arch of sky in tiny patches of turquoise.

"The same old world, after all—the same, in spite of everything—thank God!" he whispered, his very tone a prayer of thanks.

And suddenly, though why he could not have told, the grim engineer's eyes grew wet with tears that ran, unheeded, down his heavy-bearded cheeks.

CHAPTER VIII

A SIGN OF PERIL

STERN'S weakness—as he judged it—lasted but a minute. Then, realizing even more fully than ever the necessity for immediate labor and exploration, he tightened his grip upon the sledge and set forth into the forest of Madison Square.

A cotton-tail scurried away from him. A snake slid, hissing, out of sight under a jungle of fern. A butterfly, dull brown and ochre, settled upon a branch in the sunlight, where it began slowly opening and shutting its wings.

"H-m! That's a *Danaus plexippus*, right enough," commented the man. "But there are some odd changes in it. Yes, indeed, certainly some evolutionary variants. Must be a tremendous time since we went to sleep, for sure; probably very much longer than I dare guess. That's a problem I've got to go to work on, before many days."

But now for the present he dismissed it again; he pushed it aside in the press of urgent matters. And, parting the undergrowth, he broke his crackling way through the deep wood.

He had gone but a few hundred yards when an exclamation of surprised delight burst from his lips.

"Water! Water!" he cried. "What? A

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spring, so close? A pool, right here at hand? Good luck the very first thing!"

And, stopping where he stood, he gazed at it with keen, unalloyed pleasure.

There, so near to the massive bulk of the tower that the vast shadow lay broadly across it, Stern had suddenly come on as beautiful a little watercourse as ever bubbled forth under the yews of Arden or lapped the willows of Hesperides.

He beheld a roughly circular depression in the woods, fern-banked and fringed with purple blooms; at the bottom sparkled a spring, leaf-bowered, cool, Elysian.

From this, down through a channel which the water must have worn for itself by slow erosion, a small brook trickled, widening out into a pool some fifteen feet across; whence, brimming over, it purled away through the young sweet-flags and rushes with tempting little woodland notes.

"What a find!" cried the engineer. He strode forward. "So, then? Deer tracks?" he exclaimed, noting a few dainty hoof-prints in the sandy margin. "Great!" And, filled with exultation, he dropped beside the spring.

He bent over it. Setting his bearded lips to the sweet water, he drank enormous, satisfying drafts.

Sated at last, he stood up and again peered about him. All at once he burst out into jovial laughter.

"Why, this is certainly an old friend of mine, or I'm a liar!" he cried out. "This spring is nothing more or less than the lineal descendant of Madison Square fountain! But good Lord, what a change! It would make a splendid subject for a scientific article. Only—well, there aren't any readers."

Down to the wider pool he walked.

"Stern, my boy," said he, "here's where you get an A-1, first-class dip."

A minute later, stripped to the buff, the man lay splashing vigorously in the water. From top to toe he scrubbed himself vigorously with the fine, white sand. And when, some minutes later, he rose up again, the tingle and the joy of life filled him in every nerve.

For a minute he looked contemptuously at his rags, lying there on the edge of the pool. Then with a grunt he kicked them aside.

"I guess we'll dispense with those," he judged. "The bear-skin, back in the building, there, will be enough." He picked up his sledge, and, heaving a mighty breath of comfort, set out for the tower again.

"Ah, but that was certainly fine!" he exclaimed. "I feel ten years younger, already. Ten, from what? *X* minus ten, equals—"

Thoughtfully, as he walked across the elastic moss and over the pine-needles, he stroked his beard.

"Now, if I could only get a hair-cut and shave," he said. "Well, why not? Wouldn't that surprise *her*, though?"

The idea strong upon him, he hastened his steps, and soon found himself back at the door close to the huge Norway pine. But here he did not enter. Instead, he turned to the right.

Plowing through the woods, climbing over fallen columns and shattered building-stones, flushing a covey of loud-winged partridges, parting the bushes that grew thickly along the base of the wall, he now found himself in what had long ago been Twenty-Third Street.

No sign, now, of paving. Nothing except, on the other side of the way, crumbling lines of ruin. As he worked his way among the detritus of the Metropolitan, he kept sharp watch for the wreckage of a hardware store.

Not until he had crossed the ancient line of Madison Avenue and penetrated some hundred yards still further along Twenty-Third Street, did he find what he sought.

"Ah!" he suddenly cried. "Here's something now!"

And, scrambling over a pile of grass-grown rubbish with a couple of time-bitten wheels peering out—evidently the wreckage of a car—he made his way around a gaping hole where a sidewalk had caved in and so reached the interior of a shop.

"Yes, prospects here, certainly prospects," he decided, carefully inspecting the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place. "If this didn't use to be Currier & Brown's place, I'm away off my bearings. There ought to be *something* left."

"Ah! Would you?" and he flung a hastily snatched rock at a rattlesnake that had begun its dry, chirring defiance on top of what once had been a counter.

The snake vanished, while the rock, rebounding, crashed through glass.

Stern wheeled about with a cry of joy. For there, he saw, a showcase still stood near the back of the shop from within which he caught a sheen of tarnished metal.

Quickly he ran toward this, stumbling over the loose flooring, mossy and grass-grown. There in the case, preserved as you have seen Egyptian relics two or three thousand years old, in museums, the engineer beheld incalculable treasures. He thrilled with a savage, strange delight.

Another blow with the sledge demolished the remaining glass.

He trembled with excitement as he chose what he most needed.

"I certainly do understand now," said he, "why the New Zealanders took Captain Cook's old barrel-hoops and refused his cash. Same here. All the money in this town couldn't buy this rusty knife—" as he seized a corroded blade set in a horn handle, yellowed with age. And eagerly he continued the hunt.

Fifteen minutes later he had accumulated a pair of scissors, two rubber combs, another knife, two revolvers (one an automatic), and several handfuls of cartridges and a thermos bottle.

All these he stowed in a warped, mildewed remnant of a Gladstone bag, taken from a corner where a broken glass sign, "Leather Goods," lay among the rank confusion.

"I guess I've got enough, now, for the first load," he judged, more excited than if he had chanced upon a blue-clay bed crammed with Cullinan diamonds. "It's a beginning, anyhow. Now for Beatrice."

Joyously as a schoolboy with a pocketful of new-won marbles, he made his exit from the ruins of the hardware store, and started back toward the tower.

But hardly had he gone a hundred feet when all at once he drew back with a sharp cry of wonder and alarm.

There at his feet, in plain view under a little maple sapling, lay something that held him frozen with astonishment.

He snatched it up, dropping the sledge to do so.

"What? *What?*" he stammered; and he stared at the thing with widened, uncomprehending eyes.

"Merciful Heaven! How—what—" cried he.

The thing he held in his hand was *a broad, flat, flint assegai-point!*

CHAPTER IX

HEADWAY AGAINST ODDS

STERN gazed at this alarming object with far more trepidation than he would have eyed a token authentically labeled: "Direct from Mars."

For the space of a full half minute he found no word, grasped no coherent thought, came to no action save to stand there, thunder-struck, holding the rotten leather bag in one hand, the spear-head in the other.

Then, suddenly, he shouted a curse and made as though to fling it clean away. But before it had left his grasp, he checked himself.

"No, there's no use in that," he said, quite slowly. "If this thing is what it appears to be, if it isn't merely some freakish bit of stone weathered off somewhere, why, it means—my God, what doesn't it mean?"

He shuddered, and glanced fearfully about him; all his calculations already seemed crashing down about him; all his plans, half-formulated, appeared in ruin.

New, vast and unknown factors of the struggle broadened rapidly before his mental vision, if this thing were really what it looked to be.

Keenly he peered at the bit of flint in his palm. There it lay, real enough, an almost perfect specimen of the flaker's art, showing distinctly where the wood had been

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

applied to the core to peel off the many successive layers.

It could not have been above three and a half inches long, by one and a quarter wide, at its broadest part. The haft, where it had been hollowed to hold the lashings, was well marked.

A diminutive object and a skilfully formed one. At any other time or place, the engineer would have considered the finding a good fortune; but now—

"Yet after all," he said aloud, as though to strengthen and convince himself. "it's only a bit of stone. What can it prove?"

His subconsciousness seemed to make answer: "So, too, the sign that Robinson Crusoe found on the beach was only a human footmark. Do not deceive yourself."

In deep thought the engineer stood there a moment or two. Then, "Bah!" he cried. "What does it matter, anyhow? Let it come, whatever it is. If I hadn't just happened to find this, I'd have been none the wiser." And he dropped the bit of flint into the bag along with the other things.

Again he picked up his sledge, and, now more cautiously, once more started forward.

"All I can do," he thought, "is just go right ahead as though this hadn't happened at all. If trouble comes, it comes, that's all. I guess I can meet it. Always have got away with it, so far. We'll see. What's on the cards has got to be played to a finish, and the best hand wins."

He retraced his way to the spring, where he carefully rinsed and filled the thermos bottle for Beatrice. Then back to the Metropolitan he came, donned his bear-skin, which he fastened with a wire nail, and started the long climb. His sledge he carefully hid on the second floor, in an office at the left of the stairway.

"Don't think much of this hammer, after all," he said. "What I need is an ax. Perhaps this afternoon I can have another go at that hardware place and find one.

"If the handle's gone, I can haft it with green wood. With a good ax and these two revolvers—till I find some rifles—I guess we're safe enough, spear-heads or not."

He glanced about him at the ever-present molder and decay. This office, he could easily see, had been both spacious and luxurious, but now it offered only a sorry spectacle. In the dust over by a window something glittered dully.

Stern found it was a fragment of a beveled mirror, which had probably hung there and, when the frame rotted, had dropped. He brushed it off and looked eagerly into it.

A cry of amazement burst from him.

"Do I look like that?" he shouted. "Well, I won't, for long!"

He propped the glass up on the steel beam of the window-opening, and got the scissors out of the bag. Ten minutes later, the face of Allan Stern bore some resemblance to its original self. True enough, his hair remained a bit jagged, especially in the back, his brows were somewhat uneven, and the point to which his beard was trimmed was far from perfect.

But none the less his wild savagery had given place to a certain aspect of civilization that made the white bear-skin over his shoulders look doubly strange.

Stern, however, was well pleased. He smiled in satisfaction.

"What will *she* think, and say?" he wondered, as he once more took up the bag and started on the long, exhausting climb.

Sweating profusely, badly "blown"—for he had not taken much time to rest on the way—the engineer at last reached his offices in the tower.

Before entering, he called the girl's name.

"Beatrice! Oh, Beatrice! Are you awake, and visible?"

"All right, come in," she answered cheerfully and came to meet him in the doorway. She stretched her hand out to him, in welcome; and the smile she gave him set his heart pounding.

He had to laugh at her astonishment and naïve delight over his changed appearance; but all the time his eyes were eagerly devouring her beauty.

For now, freshly awakened, full of new

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

life and vigor after a sound night's sleep, the girl was magnificent.

The morning light disclosed new glints of color in her wondrous hair, as it lay broad and silken on the tiger-skin. This she had secured at the throat and waist with bits of metal taken from the wreckage of the filing-cabinet.

Stern promised himself that ere long he would find her a profusion of gold pins and chain, in some of the Fifth Avenue shops, to serve her purposes till she could fabricate real clothing.

As she gave him her hand, the Bengal skin fell from her round, warm, cream-white skin.

At sight of it, at vision of that massy crown of hair, and of those gray, penetrant, questioning eyes, the man's spent breath quickened.

He turned his own eyes quickly away, lest she should read his thought, and began speaking—of what? He hardly knew. Anything, till he could master himself.

But through it all he knew that in his whole life, till now self-centered, analytical, cold, he never had felt such real, spontaneous happiness.

The touch of her fingers soft and warm, dispelled his every anxiety. The thought that he was working, now, for her; serving her; striving to preserve and keep her, thrilled him with joy.

And as some foregleam of the future came to him, his fears dropped from him like those outworn rags he had discarded in the forest.

"Well, so we're both up and at it, again," he said, commonplacely enough, his voice a bit uncertain. Stern had walked narrow girders six hundred feet sheer up; he had worked in caissons under tidewater, with the air-pumps driving full tilt to keep death out.

He had swung in a bosun's-chair down the face of the Yosemite Canyon at Cathedral Spires. But never had he felt emotions such as now. And he marveled greatly.

"I've had grand luck," he continued. "See here, and here?"

He showed her his treasures, all the contents of the bag, except the spear-point. Then, giving her the thermos bottle, he bade her drink. Gratefully she did so, while he explained to her the finding of the spring.

Her face aglow with her eagerness and brave enthusiasm, she listened. But when he told her about the bathing-pool, an envious expression came to her.

"It's not fair," she protested, "for you to monopolize that. If you'll show me the place—and just stay around in the woods, to see that nothing hurts me—"

"You'll take a dip, too?"

Eagerly she nodded, her eyes beaming.

"I'm just dying for one!" she exclaimed. "Think! I haven't had a bath, now, for *x* years!"

"I'm at your service," declared the engineer. And for a moment a little silence came between them, a silence so profound that they could even hear the faint, far cheepings of the mud-swallows in the tower stair, above.

At the back of Stern's brain still lurked a haunting fear of the wood, of what the assegai-point might portend, but he dispelled it.

"Well, come along down," he said. "It's getting late, already. But first, we must take just one more look, by this fresh morning light, from the platform up above, there?"

She assented readily. Together, talking of their first urgent needs, of their plans for this new day and for this wonderful, strange life that now confronted them, they climbed the stairs again. Once more they issued out onto the weed-grown platform of red tiles.

There they stood a moment, looking out with wonder over that vast, still, marvelous prospect of life-in-death. Suddenly the engineer spoke.

"Tell me," said he, "where did you get that line of verse you quoted last night? The one about this vast city-heart all lying still, you know?"

"That? Why, that was from Wordsworth's Sonnet on London Bridge, of course." She smiled up at him. "You re-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

member the whole thing now, don't you?"

"No-o," he disclaimed a trifle dubiously. "I—that is, I never was much on poetry, you understand. It wasn't exactly in my line. But never mind. How did it go? I'd like to hear it, tremendously."

"I don't just recall the whole poem," she answered thoughtfully. "But I know part of it ran:

> ". . . This city now doth like a garment wear
> The beauty of the morning. Silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields and to the sky
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air."

She paused to think a moment. The sun, lancing its long and level rays across the water and the vast dead city, irradiated her face.

Instinctively, as she looked abroad over that wondrous panorama, she raised both bare arms; and, clad in the tiger-skin alone, stood for a little space like some Parsee priestess, sun-worshipping, on her tower of silence.

Stern looked at her, amazed.

Was this, could this indeed be the girl he had employed, in the old days—the other days of routine and of tedium, of orders and specifications and dry-as-dust dictation? As though from a strange spell, he aroused himself.

"The poem?" exclaimed he. "What next?"

"Oh, that? I'd almost forgotten about that, I was dreaming. It goes this way, I think.

> "Never did the sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill,
> Ne'er saw I, never felt a calm so deep;
> The river glideth at his own sweet will,
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep,
> And all this mighty heart is standing still!"

She finished the tremendous classic almost in a whisper.

They both stood silent a moment, gazing out together on that strange, inexplicable fulfilment of the poet's vision.

Up to them, through the crystal morning air, rose a faint, small sound of waters, from the brooklet in the forest. The nesting birds, below, were busy "in song and solace"; and through the golden sky above, a swallow slanted on sharp wing toward some unseen, leafy goal.

Far out upon the river, faint specks of white wheeled and hovered—a flock of swooping gulls, snowy and beautiful and free. Their pinions flashed, spiralled and sank to rest on the wide waters.

Stern breathed a sigh. His right arm slipped about the sinuous, fur-robed body of the girl.

"Come now!" he said, with returning practicality. "Bath for you, breakfast for both of us—then we must buckle down to work. *Come!*"

CHAPTER X

TERROR

NOON found them far advanced in the preliminaries of their hard adventuring.

Working together in a strong and frank companionship—the past temporarily forgotten and the future still put far away—half a day's labor advanced them a long distance on the road to safety.

Even these few hours sufficed to prove that, unless some strange, untoward accident occurred, they stood a more than equal chance of winning out.

Realizing, to begin with, that a home on the forty-eighth story of the tower was entirely impractical, since it would mean that most of their time would have to be used in laborious climbing, they quickly changed their dwelling.

They chose a suite of offices on the fifth floor, looking directly out over and into the cool green beauty of Madison Forest. In an hour or so, they cleared out the bats and spiders, the rubbish and the dust, and made the place very decently presentable.

"Well, that's a good beginning, anyhow," remarked the engineer, standing back and looking critically at the finished work.

"I don't see why we shouldn't make a fairly comfortable home out of this, for a while. It's not too high for ease, and it's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With a strength he never dreamed was his Stern caught up the fainting girl and used his wounded arm to fling the gun barrel straight into the jabbering ape faces

high enough for safety—to keep prowling bears and wolves and—and other things from exploring us in the night."

He laughed, but memories of the spearhead tinged his merriment with apprehension.

"In a day or two I'll make some kind of an outer door, or barricade. But first, I need that ax and some other things. Can you spare me for a while, now?"

"I'd rather go along, too," she answered wistfully, from the window-sill where she sat resting.

"No, not this time, please!" he entreated. "First I've got to go 'way to the top of the tower and bring down my chemicals and all the other things that are up there.

"Then I'm going out on a hunt for dishes, a lamp, some oil and no end of things. You save your strength for a while; stay here and keep house and be a good girl."

"All right," she acceded, smiling a little sadly. "But really, I feel perfectly able to go."

"This afternoon, perhaps; not now. Goodby!" And he started for the door. Then a thought struck him. He turned and came back.

"By the way," he said, "if we can fix up some kind of holster, I'll take one of those revolvers. With the scissors and the best of this leather here," nodding at the Gladstone bag, "I should imagine we could manufacture something serviceable."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They planned the holster together, and he cut it out with his knife, while she slit leather thongs to lash it with. Presently it was done, and a strap to tie it round his waist with—a crude, rough thing, but just as useful as though finished with the utmost skill.

"We'll make another for you when I get home this noon," he remarked, picking up the automatic and a handful of cartridges. Quickly he filled the magazine. The shells were green with verdigris, and many a rust-spot disfigured the one-time brightness of the arm.

As he stepped over to the window, aimed and pulled trigger, a sharp and welcome report burst from the weapon. And a few leaves, clipped from an oak in the forest, zigzagged down in the bright, warm sunlight.

"I guess she'll do, all right!" he laughed, sliding the ugly weapon into his new holster. "You see, the powder and fulminate, sealed up in the cartridges, are practically imperishable. Here, let me load yours, too.

"If you want something to do, you can practice on that dead limb out there, see? And don't be afraid of wasting ammunition. There must be millions of cartridges in this old burg—millions—all ours!"

Again he laughed, and handing her the other pistol, now fully loaded, went away. Before he had climbed a hundred feet up the tower stair he heard a slow, uneven pop—pop—popping, and with satisfaction knew that Beatrice was already perfecting herself in the use of the revolver.

"And she may need it, too—we both may, badly—before we know it," he thought, frowning as he kept upon his way.

This reflection weighed in so heavily upon him, all due to the flint assegai-point, that he made still another excuse that afternoon and so got out of taking the girl into the forest with him, exploring.

The excuse was all the more plausible inasmuch as he left her enough work at home to do, making some real clothing and some sandals for them both. This task, now that the girl had scissors to use, was not too hard.

Stern brought her great armfuls of the furs from the shop in the arcade, and left her busily and happily employed.

He spent the afternoon in scouting through the entire neighborhood from Sixth Avenue to as far east as Third, and from Twenty-Seventh Street down through Union Square.

Revolver in his left hand, knife in his right to cut away troublesome bush or brambles, or to slit impeding vine-masses, he progressed slowly and observantly.

He kept his eyes open for big game, but—though he found moose-tracks at the corner of Broadway and Nineteenth—he ran into nothing more formidable than a lynx, which snarled at him from a tree overhanging some mournful ruins.

One shot sent it bounding and screaming with pain, out of view. Stern noted with satisfaction that blood followed its trail.

"Guess I haven't forgotten how to shoot in all these *x* years," he commented, stooping to examine the spoor. "That may come in handy later."

Then, still wary and watchful, he continued his exploration.

He found that the city, as such, had entirely ceased to be.

"Nothing but lines and monstrous rubbish heaps of ruin," he sized up the situation, "traversed by lanes of forest and overgrown with every sort of vegetation."

Every wooden building completely wiped out. Brick and stone ones practically gone. Steel alone standing, and that in rotten shape. Nothing at all intact but the few concrete structures.

"Ha! ha!" And he laughed satirically. "If the builders could have foreseen this they wouldn't have thrown quite such a chest, eh? And *they* talked of engineering!"

Useless though it was, he felt a certain pride in noting that a building on Seventeenth Street had lasted rather better than the average.

"*My* work," said he, nodding with grim satisfaction, then passed on.

He penetrated into the subway at Eighteenth Street, climbing with difficulty down the choked stairway, through bushes and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over masses of ruin that had fallen from the roof. The great tube, he saw, was choked with litter.

Slimy and damp it was, with a mephitic smell and ugly pools of water settled in the ancient road-bed. The rails were wholly gone in places. In others only rotten fragments of steel remained.

A goggle-eyed toad stared impudently at him from a long tangle of rubbish that had been a train—stalled there forever by the final block-signal of death.

Through the broken arches overhead the rain and storms of ages had beaten down, and lush grasses flourished here and there, where sunlight could penetrate.

No human dust-heaps here, as in the shelter of the arcade. Long since every vestige of man had been swept away. Stern shuddered, more depressed by the sight here than at any other place he had so far visited.

"And they boasted of a work for all time!" whispered he, awed by the horror of it. "They boasted—like the financiers, the churchmen, the merchants, everybody. Boasted of their institutions, their city, their country. And *now*—"

He clambered out presently, terribly depressed by what he had witnessed, and set to work laying in still more supplies from the wrecked shops. Now for the first time, his wonder and astonishment having largely abated, he began to feel the horror of this loneliness.

"No life here! Nobody to speak to—except the girl!" he exclaimed aloud, the sound of his own voice uncanny in that woodland street of death. "All gone, everything! My Heavens, suppose I didn't have *her?* How long could I go on alone, and keep my mind?"

The thought terrified him. He put it resolutely away and went to work. Wherever he stumbled upon anything of value he eagerly seized upon it.

The labor, he found, kept him from the subconscious dread of what might happen to Beatrice or to himself if either should meet with any mishap. The consequences of either one dying, he knew, must be horrible beyond all thinking for the survivor.

Up Broadway he found much to keep—things which he garnered in the up-caught hem of his bearskin, things of all kinds and uses. He found a clay pipe—all the wooden ones had vanished from the shop—and a glass jar of tobacco.

These he took as priceless treasures. More jars of edibles he discovered, also a stock of rare wines. He came upon coffee and salt. In the ruins of a little French brass-ware shop, he made a rich haul of cups and plates and a still serviceable lamp.

Strangely enough, it still had oil in it. The fluid, hermetically sealed in, had not been able to evaporate.

At last, when the lengthening shadows in Madison Forest warned him that day was ending, he betook himself, heavy-laden, once more back past the spring, and so through the path which already was beginning to be visible back to the shelter of the Metropolitan.

"Now for a great surprise for the girl!" thought he, laboriously toiling up the stairs with his burden. "What will she say, I wonder, when she sees all these housekeeping treasures?" Eagerly he hastened.

But before he had reached the third story he heard a cry from above. Then a spatter of revolver-shots suddenly punctured the air.

He stopped, listening in alarm.

"Beatrice! Oh, Beatrice!" he hailed, his voice falling flat and stifled in those ruinous passages.

Another shot.

"Answer!" panted Stern. "What's the matter *now?*"

Hastily he put down his burden, and, spurred by a great terror, bounded up the broken stairs.

Into their little shelter, their home, he ran, calling her name.

No reply came!

Stern stopped short, his face a livid gray.

"Merciful Heaven!" he stammered in terror.

The girl was gone!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XI

EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS!

SICKENED with a numbing anguish of fear such as in all his thirty years he had never known, Stern stood there a moment, motionless and lost.

Then he turned. Out into the hall he ran, and his voice, re-echoing wildly, rang through those long-deserted aisles.

All at once he heard a laugh behind him—a hail.

He wheeled about, trembling and spent. Out went his arms in eager greeting. For the girl, laughing and flushed, and very beautiful was coming down the stair at the end of the hall.

Never had the engineer beheld a sight so wonderful to him as this woman, clad in the Bengal robe; this girl who smiled and ran to meet him.

"What? Were you frightened?" she asked, growing suddenly serious, as he stood there speechless and pale. "Why, what could happen to me here?"

His only answer was to take her in his arms and whisper her name. But she struggled to be free.

"Don't! You mustn't!" she exclaimed. "I didn't mean to alarm you. Didn't even know you were here!"

"I heard the shots—I called—you didn't answer. Then—"

"You found me gone? I didn't hear you. It was nothing, after all. Nothing—much."

He led her back into the room.

"What happened? Tell me!"

"It was really too absurd."

"What was it?"

"Only this," and she laughed again. "I was getting supper ready, as you see," with a nod at their provisions laid out upon the clean-brushed floor. "When—"

"Yes?"

"Why, a blundering great hawk swooped in through the window there, circled around, pounced on the last of our beef and tried to fly away with it."

Stern heaved a sigh of relief. "So that was all?" he asked. "But the shots? And your absence?"

"I struck at him. He showed fight. I blocked the window. He was determined to get away with the food. I was determined he shouldn't. So I snatched the revolver and opened fire."

"And then?"

"That confused him. He flapped out into the hall. I chased him. He circled away up the stairs. I shot again. Then I pursued. Went up two stories. But he must have got away through some opening or other. Our beef's all gone!" And Beatrice looked very sober.

"Never mind, I've got a lot more stuff downstairs. But tell me, did you wing him?"

"I'm afraid not," she admitted. "There's a feather or two on the stairs though."

"Good work!" he cried, laughing, his fear all swallowed in the joy of having found her again, safe and unhurt. "But please don't give me another such panic, will you? It's all right this time, however.

"And now if you'll just wait here and not get fighting with any more wild creatures I'll go down and bring my latest finds. I like your pluck," he added slowly, gazing earnestly at her. "But I don't want you chasing things in this old shell of a building. No telling what crevice you might fall into or what accident might happen. *Au revoir!*"

Her smile as he left her was inscrutable, but her eyes, strangely bright, followed him till he had vanished once more down the stairs.

Broad strokes, a line here, one there, with much left to the imagining—such will serve best for the painting of a picture like this—a picture wherein every ordinary bond of human life, the nexus of man's society is shattered.

Where everything must strive to reconstruct itself from the dust. Where the future, if any such there may be, must rise from the ashes of a crumbling past.

Broad strokes, for detailed ones would fill too vast a canvas. Impossible to describe a tenth of the activities of Beatrice and Stern the next four days. Even to make a list of their hard-won possessions would

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turn this chapter into a mere catalogue.

So let these pass for the most part. Day by day the man, issuing forth sometimes alone, sometimes with Beatrice, labored like a Titan among the ruins of New York.

Though more than ninety per cent of the city's one-time wealth had long since vanished, and though all standards of worth had wholly changed, yet much remained to harvest.

Infinitudes of things, more or less damaged, they bore up to their shelter, up the stairs which here and there Stern had repaired with rough-hewn logs.

For now he had an ax, found in that treasure-house of Currier & Brown's, brought to a sharp edge on a wet, flat stone by the spring, and hafted with a sapling.

This implement was of incredible use, and greatly enheartened the engineer. More valuable it was than a thousand tons of solid gold.

The same store yielded also a well-preserved enameled water-pail and some smaller dishes of like ware, three more knives, quantities of nails, and some small tools.

Also the tremendous bonanza of a magazine rifle and a shotgun, both of which Stern judged would come into shape by the application of oil and by careful tinkering. Of ammunition, here and elsewhere, the engineer had no doubt he could unearth unlimited quantities.

"With steel," he reflected, "and with my flint spear-head, I can make fire at any time. Wood is plentiful and there's lots of 'punk.' So the first step in reestablishing civilization is secure. With fire, everything else becomes possible.

"After a while, perhaps, I can get around to manufacturing matches again. But for the present my few ounces of phosphorus and the flint and steel will answer very well."

Beatrice, like the true woman she was, addressed herself eagerly to the fascinating task of making a real home out of the barren desolation of the fifth floor offices. Her splendid energy was no less than the engineer's. And very soon a comfortable air pervaded the place.

Stern manufactured a broom for her by cutting willow withes and lashing them with hide strips onto a trimmed branch. Spiders and dust all vanished. A true housekeeping appearance set in.

To supplement the supply of canned food that accumulated along one of the walls, Stern shot what game he could—squirrels, partridge and rabbits.

Metal dishes, especially of solid gold, ravished from Fifth Avenue shops, took their place on the crude table he had fashioned with his ax. Not for esthetic effect did they now value gold, but merely because that metal had perfectly withstood the ravages of time.

In the ruins of a magnificent store near Thirty-First Street Stern found a vault burst open by frost and slow disintegration of the steel.

Here something over a quart of loose diamonds, big and little, rough and cut, were lying in confusion all about. Stern took none of these. Their value now was no greater than that of any pebble.

But he chose a massive clasp of gold for Beatrice, for that could serve to fasten her robe. And in addition he gathered up a few rings and one-time costly jewels which could be worn. For the girl, after all, was one of Eve's daughters.

Bit by bit he accumulated many necessary articles, including some toothbrushes which he found sealed in glass bottles, and a variety of gold toilet articles. Use was his first consideration now. Beauty came far behind.

In the corner of their rooms, after a time, stood a fair variety of tools, some already serviceable, others waiting to be polished, ground and hafted, and in some cases retempered. Two rough chairs made their appearance.

The north room, used only for cooking, became their forge and oven all in one. For here, close to a window where the smoke could drift out, Stern built a circular stone fireplace.

And here Beatrice presided over her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

copper casseroles and saucepans from the little shop on Broadway. Here, too, Stern planned to construct a pair of skin bellows, and presently to set up the altars of Vulcan and of Tubal Cain once more.

Both of them "thanked whatever gods there be" that the girl was a good cook. She amazed the engineer by the variety of dishes she managed to concoct from the canned goods, the game that Stern shot, and fresh dandelion greens dug near the spring. These edibles, with the blackest of black coffee, soon had them in fine fettle.

"I certainly have begun to put on weight," laughed the man after dinner on the fourth day, as he lighted his fragrant pipe with a roll of blazing birch-bark.

"My bearskin is getting tight. You'll have to let it out for me, or else stop such magic in the kitchen!"

She smiled back at him, sitting there at ease in the sunshine by the window, sipping her coffee out of a glass jar with a solid gold spoon.

Stern, feeling the May breeze upon his face, hearing the bird-songs in the forest depths, felt a well-being, a glow of health and joy such as he had never known in his whole life—the health of outdoor labor and sound sleep and perfect digestion, the joy of accomplishment and of the girl's near presence.

"I suppose we do live pretty well," she answered, surveying the remnants of the feast. "Potted tongue and peas, fried squirrel, partridge and coffee ought to satisfy anybody. But still—"

"What is it?"

"I *would* like some buttered toast and some cream for my coffee, and some sugar."

Stern laughed heartily.

"You don't want much!" he exclaimed, vastly amused, the while he blew a cloud of Latakia smoke. "Well, you be patient and everything will come, in time.

"You mustn't expect me to do magic. On the fourth day you don't imagine I've had time enough to round up the ten thousandth descendant of the erstwhile cow, do you?

"Or grow cane and make sugar? Or find grain for seed, clear some land, plow, harrow, plant, hoe, reap, winnow, grind and bolt and present you with a bag of prime flour? Now really?"

She pouted at his raillery. For a moment there was silence, while he drew at his pipe. He looked at the girl a little while. Then, his eyes a bit far-away, he remarked in a tone he tried to make casual:

"By the way, Beatrice, it occurs to me that we're doing rather well for old people —very old."

She looked up with a startled glance.

"*Very?*" she exclaimed. "You know how old, then?"

"Very, indeed!" he answered. "Yes, I've got some sort of an idea about it. I hope it won't alarm you when you know."

"Why—how so? Alarm me?" she queried with a strange expression.

"Yes, because, you see, it's rather a long time since we went to sleep. Quite so. You see, I've been doing a little calculating, off and on, at odd times. Been putting two and two together, as it were.

"First, there was the matter of the dust in sheltered places, to guide me. The rate of deposition of what, in one or two spots, can't have been anything less than cosmic or star-dust, is fairly certain.

"Then again, the rate of this present deterioration of stone and steel has furnished another index. And last night I had a little peek at the pole-star, through my telescope, while you were asleep.

"The good old star has certainly shifted out of place a bit. Furthermore, I've been observing certain evolutionary changes in the animals and plants about us. Those have helped, too."

"And—and what have you found out?" she asked with tremulous interest.

"Well, I think I've got the answer, more or less correctly. Of course it's only an approximate result, as we say in engineering. But the different items check up with some degree of consistency.

"And I'm safe in believing I'm within at least a hundred years of the date one way or the other. Not a bad factor of safety, that, with my limited means of working."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The girl's eyes widened. The empty gold cup fell from her hand and rolled away across the clean-swept floor.

"What?" she cried. "You've got it, within a hundred years! Why, then—you mean it's *more* than a hundred?"

The engineer smiled indulgently.

"Come, now," he coaxed. "Just guess, for instance, how old you really are—and growing younger every day? How old?"

"Two hundred maybe? Oh, surely not as old as that! It's horrible to think of!"

"Listen," he ordered. "If I count your twenty-four years, when you went to sleep, you're now—"

"What?"

"You're now at the very minimum calculation, just about eight hundred and twenty-four! Some age, that, eh?"

Then, as she stared at him wide-eyed he added with a smile:

"No disputing that fact, no dodging it. The thing's as certain as that you're now the most beautiful woman in the whole wide world!"

CHAPTER XII

DRAWING TOGETHER

DAYS passed, busy days, full of hard labor and achievement, rich in experience and learning, in happiness, in dreams of what the future might yet bring.

Beatrice made and finished a considerable wardrobe of garments for them both. These when the fur had been clipped close with the scissors, were not oppressively warm, and, even though on some days a bit uncomfortable, the man and woman tolerated them because they had no others.

Plenty of bathing and good food put them in splendid physical condition, to which their plentiful exercise contributed much. And thus, judging partly by the state of the foliage, partly by the height of the sun—which Stern determined with considerable accuracy by means of a simple, home-made quadrant—they knew mid-May was past and June was drawing near.

The housekeeping by no means took up all the girl's time. Often she went out with him on what he called his "pirating expeditions," that now sometimes led them as far afield as the sad ruins of the wharves and piers, or to the stark desolation and wreckage of lower Broadway's one-time busy hives, or up to Central Park or to the great remains of the two railroad terminals.

These two places, the former tide-gates of the city's life, impressed Stern most painfully of anything. The disintegrated tracks, the jumbled remains of locomotives and luxurious Pullmans with weeds growing rank upon them.

The sunlight beating down through the caved-in roof of the Pennsylvania station "concourse," where millions of human beings once had trod in all the haste of men's paltry, futile affairs, filled him with melancholy. He was glad to get away again, leaving the place to the jungle, the birds and beasts that now laid claim to it.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi!*" he murmured, as with sad eyes he mused upon the down-tumbled columns along the façade, the overgrown entrance-way, the cracked and falling arches and architraves. "And *this*, they said, was builded for all time!"

It was on one of these expeditions that the engineer found and pocketed—unknown to Beatrice—a disconcerting relic.

This was a bone, broken and splintered, and of no very great age, gnawed with perfectly visible tooth-marks. He picked it up, by chance, near the City Hall ruins.

Stern recognized the manner in which the bone had been cracked open with a stone to let the marrow be sucked out. The sight of this gruesome relic revived all his fears, tenfold more acute than ever, and filled him with a sense of vague, impending peril, of peril deadly to them both.

This was the more acute, because the engineer knew at a glance that the bone was the upper end of a human femur—human, or at the very least, belonging to some highly anthropoid animal. And of apes or gorillas he had, as yet, found no trace in the forests of Manhattan.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He mused a long time over this find. But not a single word did he ever say to Beatrice concerning it or the flint spear-point. Only he kept his eyes and ears well open for other bits of corroborative evidence.

And he never ventured a foot from the building unless his rifle and revolver were with him, their magazines full of high-power shells.

The girl always went armed, too, and soon grew to be such an expert shot that she could drop a squirrel from the tip of a fir, or wing a heron in full flight.

Once her quick eyes spied a deer in the tangles of the one-time Gramercy Park, now no longer neatly hedged with iron palings, but spread in wild confusion that joined the riot of the growth beyond.

She fired on the instant, wounding the creature.

Stern's shot, echoing hers, missed. Already the deer was away, out of range through the forest. With some difficulty they pursued down a glenlike strip of woods that must once have been Irving Place.

Two hundred yards south of the park they sighted the animal again. And the girl with a single shot sent it crashing to earth.

"Bravo, Diana!" hurrahed Stern, running forward with enthusiasm. The "deer fever" was on him, as strong as in his old days in the Hudson Bay country. Hot was the pleasure of the kill when that meant food. As he ran he jerked his knife from the skin sheath the girl had made for him.

Thus they had fresh venison to their hearts' content—venison broiled over white-hot coals in the fireplace, juicy and savory-sweet beyond all telling.

They smoked and salted down a good deal of the meat for future use. Stern undertook to tan the hide with strips of hemlock bark laid in a water-pit dug near the spring. He added also some oak-bark, nut-galls and a good quantity of young sumac shoots.

"I guess that ought to hit the mark if anything will," he remarked, as he immersed the skin and weighted it down with rocks.

"It's like the old 'shotgun' prescriptions of our extinct doctors—a little of everything, bound to do the trick, one way or another."

The great variety of labors now imposed upon him began to try his ingenuity to the full. In spite of all his wealth of practical knowledge and his scientific skill, he was astounded at the huge demands of even the simplest human life.

The girl and he now faced these, without the social cooperation which they had formerly taken entirely for granted, and the change of conditions had begun to alter Stern's concepts of almost everything.

He was already beginning to realize to the full how true the old saying was: "One man is no man!" and how the world had *been* the world merely because of the inter-relations, the inter-dependencies of human beings in vast numbers.

He was commencing to get a glimpse of the vanished social problems that had enmeshed civilization, in their true light, now that all he confronted and had to struggle with was the unintelligent and overbearing dominance of nature.

All this was of huge value to the engineer. And the strong individualism (essentially anarchistic) on which he had prided himself eight hundred years ago, was now beginning to receive some mortal blows, even during these first days of the new, solitary, unsocialized life.

But neither he nor the girl had very much time for introspective thought. Each moment brought its immediate task, and every day seemed busier than the last had been.

At meals, however, or at evening, as they sat together by the light of their lamp in the now homelike offices, Stern and Beatrice found pleasure in a little random speculation. Often they discussed the catastrophe and their own escape.

Stern brought to mind some experiments with animals, in which animation had been suspended for long periods by sudden

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

freezing. This method seemed to answer, in a way, the girl's earlier questions as to how they had escaped death in the many long winters since they had gone to sleep.

Again, they tried to imagine the scenes just following the catastrophe, the horror of that long-past day, and the slow, irrevocable decay of all the monuments of the human race.

Often they talked till past midnight, by the glow of their stone fireplace, and many were the aspects of the case that they developed. These hours seemed to Stern the happiest of his life.

For the understanding between this beautiful woman and himself at such times became very close and fascinatingly intimate, and Stern felt, little by little, that the love which now was growing deep within his heart for her was not without its answer in her own.

But for the present the man restrained himself and spoke no overt word. For that, he understood, would immediately have put all things on a different basis—and there was urgent work still waiting to be done.

"There's no doubt in my mind," he said one day as they sat talking, "that you and I are absolutely the last human beings—civilized I mean—left alive anywhere in the world.

"If anybody else had been spared, whether in Chicago or Hong-Kong, they'd have made some determined effort before now to get in touch with New York. This, the prime center of the financial and industrial world, would have been their first objective point."

"But suppose," she asked, "there *were* others, just a few here or there, and they'd only recently waked up, like ourselves? Could they have succeeded in making themselves known to us so soon?"

He shook his head dubiously.

"There may be some one else, somewhere," he answered slowly, "but there's nobody else in this part of the world, anyhow. Nobody in this particular Eden but just you and I. To all intents and purposes I'm Adam. And you—well, you're Eve! But the tree? We haven't found that yet."

She gave him a quick, startled glance, then let her head fall, so that he could not see her eyes. But he saw a tide of color mount up over her neck, her cheek and even to her temples where the lustrous masses of hair fell away.

And for a little space the man forgot to smoke. He gazed at her, a strange gleam in his eyes.

And no word passed between them for a while. But their thoughts—

CHAPTER XIII

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

THE idea that there might possibly be others of their kind in far-distant parts of the earth worked strongly on the mind of the girl. Next day she broached the subject again to her companion.

"Suppose," she theorized, "there might be a few score of others, maybe a few hundred, scattered here and there? They might awaken one by one, only to die, if less favorably situated than we happen to be. Perhaps thousands may have slept, like us, only to wake up to starvation."

"There's no telling, of course," he answered seriously. "Undoubtedly that may be very possible. Some may have escaped the great death, on high altitudes—on the Eiffel Tower, for instance, or on certain mountains or lofty plateaus. The most we can do for the moment is just to guess at probabilities. And—"

"But if there are people elsewhere," she interrupted eagerly, her eyes glowing with hope, "isn't there any way to get in touch with them? Why should we expect them to seek us out? Why don't *we* hunt? Suppose only one or two in each country should have survived; if we could get them all together again in a single colony—don't you see?"

"You mean the different languages and arts and all the rest might still be preserved? The colony might grow and flourish, and mankind again take possession of the earth and conquer it, in a few dec-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ades? Yes, of course. But even though there shouldn't be anybody else, there's no cause for despair. Of that, however, we won't speak now."

"But why don't we try to find out about it?" she persisted. "If there were only the remotest chance—"

"By Jove, I *will* try it!" exclaimed the engineer, fired with a new thought, a fresh ambition. "How? I don't know just yet, but I'll see. There'll be a way, right enough, if I can only think it out."

That afternoon he made his way down Broadway, past the copper-shop, to the remains of a telegraph-office in the Flat-iron Building.

He penetrated into it with some difficulty. A mournful sight it was, this one-time busy ganglion of the nation's nerve-system. Benches and counters were quite gone, instruments corroded past recognition, everything in hideous disorder.

But in a rear room Stern found a large quantity of copper wire. The wooden drums on which it had been wound were gone; the insulation had vanished, but the coils of wire still remained.

"Fine!" said the explorer, gathering together several coils. "Now when I get this over to the Metropolitan, I think the first step toward success will have been taken."

By nightfall he had accumulated enough wire for his tentative experiments. Next day he and the girl explored the remains of the old wireless station on the roof of the building, overlooking Madison Avenue.

They reached the roof by climbing out of a window on the east side of the tower and descending a fifteen-foot ladder that Stern had built for the purpose out of rough branches.

"You see, it's fairly intact as yet," remarked the engineer, gesturing at the broad expanse. "Only falling stones have made holes here and there. See how they yawn down into the rooms below! Well, come on, follow me. I'll tap with the ax, and if the roof holds me, you'll be safe."

Thus, after a little while, they found a secure path to the little station.

This diminutive building, fortunately constructed of concrete, still stood almost unharmed. Into it they penetrated through the crumbling door. The winds of heaven had centuries ago swept away all trace of the ashes of the operator.

But the apparatus still stood there, rusted and sagging and disordered, yet to Stern's practiced eye showing signs of promise. An hour's careful overhauling convinced the engineer that something might yet be accomplished.

And thus they set to work in earnest.

First, with the girl's help, he strung his copper-wire antennae from the tiled platform of the tower to the roof of the wireless station. Rough work this was, but answering the purpose as well as though of the utmost finish.

He connected up the repaired apparatus with these antennae, and made sure all was well. Then he dropped wires over the side of the building to connect with one of the dynamos in the sub-basement.

All this took two and a half days of severe labor, in intervals of food-getting, cooking and household tasks. At last, when it was done, the engineer said:

"Now for some power!"

And with his lamp he went down to inspect the dynamos again and to assure himself that his belief was correct, his faith that one or two of them could be put into running order.

Three of the machines gave little promise, for water had dripped in on them and they were rusted beyond any apparent rehabilitation. The fourth, standing nearest Twenty-Third Street, had by some freak of chance been protected by a canvas cover.

This cover was now only a mass of rotten rags, but it had at least safeguarded the machine for so long that no very serious deterioration had set in.

Stern worked the better part of a week, with such tools as he could find or make—he had to forge a wrench for the largest nuts—"taking down" the dynamo, oiling, filing, polishing and repairing it, part by part.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The commutator was in bad shape and the brushes terribly corroded. But he tinkered and patched, hammered and heated and filed away, and at last, putting the machine together again with terrible exertion, decided that it would run.

"Steam, now!" was his next watchword, when he had wired the dynamo to connect with the station on the roof. And this was on the eighth day since he had begun his labor.

An examination of the boiler-room, which he reached by moving a ton of fallen stone-work from the doorway into the dynamo-room, encouraged him still further. As he penetrated into this place, feeble-shining lamp held on high, eyes eager to behold the prospect, he knew that success was not far away.

Down in these depths, almost as in the interior of the great Pyramid of Gizeh—though the place smelled dank and close and stifling—time seemed to have lost much of its destructive power. He chose one boiler that looked sound, and began looking for coal.

Of this he found a plentiful supply, well-preserved, in the bunkers. All one afternoon he labored, wheeling it in a steel barrow and dumping it in front of the furnace.

Where the smoke-stack led to and what condition it was in, he knew not. He could not tell where the gases of combustion would escape to; but this he decided to leave to chance.

He grimaced at sight of the rusted flues and the steam-pipes connecting with the dynamo-room—pipes now denuded of their asbestos packing and leaky at several joints.

A strange, gnome-like picture he presented as he poked and pried in those dim regions, by the dim rays of the lamp. Spiders, roaches and a great gray rat or two were his only companions—those, and hope.

"I don't know but I'm a fool to try and carry this thing out," said he, dubiously surveying the pipe. "I'm liable to start something here that I can't stop. Water-glasses leaky, gauges plugged up, safety-valve rusted into its seat—the devil!"

But still he kept on. Something drove him inexorably forward. For he was an engineer—and an American.

His next task was to fill the boiler. This he had to do by bringing water, two pails at a time, from the spring. It took him three days.

Thus, after eleven days of heart-breaking lonely toil in that grimy dungeon, hampered for lack of tools, working with rotten materials, naked and sweaty, grimed, spent, profane, exhausted, everything was ready for the experiment—the strangest, surely, in the annals of the human race.

He lighted up the furnace with dry wood then stoked it full of coal. After an hour and a half his heart thrilled with mingled fear and exultation at sight of the steam, first white, then blue and thin, that began to hiss from the leaks in the long pipe.

"No way to estimate pressure, or anything," remarked he. "It's bull luck whether I go to hell or not!" And he stood back from the blinding glare of the furnace. With his naked arm he wiped the sweat from his streaming forehead.

"Bull luck!" repeated he. "But by the Almighty, I'll send that Morse, or bust!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE MOVING LIGHTS

PANTING with exhaustion and excitement, Stern made his way back to the engine-room. It was a strangely critical moment when he seized the corroded throttle-wheel to start the dynamo. The wheel stuck, and would not budge.

Stern, with a curse of sheer exasperation, snatched up his long spanner, shoved it through the spokes, and wrenched.

Groaning, the wheel gave way. It turned. The engineer hauled again.

"Go on!" shouted the man. "Start! Move!"

With a hissing plaint, as though rebellious against this awakening after its age-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

long sleep, the engine creaked into motion.

In spite of all Stern's oiling, every journal and bearing squealed in anguish. A rickety tremble possessed the engine as it gained speed. The dynamo began to hum with wild, strange protests of racked metal. The ancient "drive" of tarred hemp strained and quivered, but held.

And like the one-hoss shay about to collapse, the whole fabric of the resuscitated plant, leaking at a score of joints, creaking, whistling, shaking, voicing a hundred agonized mechanic woes, revived in a grotesque, absurd and shocking imitation of its one-time beauty and power.

At sight of this ghastly resurrection, the engineer (whose whole life had been passed in the love of service of machinery) felt a strange and sad emotion.

He sat down, exhausted, on the floor. The lamp trembled in his hand. Yet, all covered with sweat and dirt and rust as he was, this moment of triumph was one of the sweetest he had ever known.

He realized that this was now no time for inaction. Much yet remained to be done. So he got up again, and set to work.

First he made sure the dynamo was running with no serious defect and that his wiring had been made properly. Then he heaped the furnace full of coal, and closed the door, leaving only enough draft to insure fairly a steady heat for an hour or so.

This done, he toiled back up to where Beatrice was eagerly awaiting him in the little wireless station on the roof.

He staggered in, all but spent. Panting for breath, wild-eyed, his coal-blackened arms stretching out from the whiteness of the bear-skin, he made a singular picture.

"It's going!" he exclaimed. "I've got current—it's good for a while, anyhow. Now—now for the test!"

For a moment he leaned heavily against the concrete bench to which the apparatus was clamped. Already the day had drawn close to its end. The glow of evening had begun to fade a trifle, along the distant skyline; and beyond the Palisades a dull purple pall was settling down.

By the dim light that filtered through the doorway, Beatrice looked at his deep-lined, bearded face, now reeking with sweat and grimed with dust and coal. An ugly face—but not to her. For through that mask she read the dominance, the driving force, the courage of this versatile, unconquerable man.

Suddenly Stern laughed, with a strange accent in his voice. "Well then, here goes for the operator in the Eiffel Tower."

Again he glanced keenly, in the failing light, at the apparatus before him.

"She'll do, I guess," he judged, slipping on the rusted head-receiver. He laid his hand upon the key and tried a few tentative dots and dashes.

Breathless, the girl watched, daring no longer to question him. In the dielectric, the green sparks and spurts of living flame began to crackle and to hiss like living spirits of an unknown power.

Stern, feeling again harnessed to his touch the life-force of the world that once had been, exulted with a wild emotion. Yet, science-worshiper that he was, something of reverent awe tinged the keen triumph. A strange gleam dwelt within his eyes; and the breath came quick through his lips as he flung his very being into this supreme experiment.

He reached for the ondometer. Carefully, slowly, he "tuned up" the wave-lengths; up, up to five thousand feet, then back again; he ran the whole gamut of the wireless scale.

Out, ever out into the thickening gloom, across the void and vacancy of the dead world, he flung the lightnings in a wild appeal. His face grew hard and eager.

"Anything? Any answer?" asked Beatrice, laying a hand upon his shoulder—a hand that trembled.

He shook his head in negation. Again he turned the roaring current on; again he hurled out into ether his cry of warn-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing and distress, of hope, of invitation—the last lone call of man to man—of the last New Yorker to any other human being who, by the merest chance, might possibly hear him in the wreck of other cities, other lands. "S.O.S.!" crackled the green flame. "S.O.S. S.O.S.!—"

NIGHT came fully, as they waited, as they called and listened; as, together there in that tiny structure on the roof of the tremendous ruin, they swept the heavens and the earth with their wild call—in vain.

Half an hour passed and still the engineer, grim as death, whirled the chained lightnings out and away.

"Nothing yet?" Beatrice cried at last, unable to keep silence any longer. "Are you quite sure you can't—"

The question was not finished.

For suddenly, far down below them, as though buried in the entrails of the earth, there shuddered a stifled, booming roar.

Through every rotten beam and fiber the vast wreck of the building vibrated. Some wall or other, somewhere, crumbled and went crashing down with a long, deep droning thunder that ended in a sliding diminuendo of noise.

"The boilers!" shouted Stern.

He flung off the head-piece. He leaped up; he seized the girl.

He dragged her out of the place. She screamed as a huge weight from high aloft on the tower smashed bellowing through the roof, and with a shower of stones ripped its way down through the rubbish of the floors below, as easily as a bullet would pierce a newspaper.

The crash sent them recoiling. The whole roof shook and trembled like honeycombed ice in a spring thaw.

Down below, something rumbled, jarred, and came to rest.

Both of them expected nothing but that the entire structure would collapse like a card-house and shatter down in ruins that would be their death.

But though it swayed and quivered, as in the grasp of an earthquake, it held.

Stern circled Beatrice with his arm.

"Courage, now! Steady, now *steady!*" cried he.

The grinding, the booming of down-hurled stones and walls died away; the echoes ceased. A wind-whipped cloud of steam and smoke burst up, fanlike, beyond the edge of the roof. It bellied away, dim in the night, upon the stiff northerly breeze.

"Fire?" ventured the girl.

"No! Nothing to burn. But come, come; let's get out of this, anyhow. There's nothing doing, any more. All through! Too much risk staying up here."

Silent and dejected, they made their cautious way over the shaken roof. They walked with the greatest circumspection, to avoid falling through some new hole or freshly opened crevasse.

To Stern, especially, this accident was bitter. After nearly a fortnight's exhausting toil, the miserable fiasco was maddening.

"Look!" the engineer exclaimed suddenly, pointing. A vast, gaping cañon of blackness opened at their very feet—a yawning gash forty feet long and ten or twelve broad, with roughly jagged edges, leading down into unfathomed depths below.

Stern gazed at it, puzzled, a moment, then peered up into the darkness above.

"H-m!" said he. "One of the half-ton hands of the big clock up there has just taken a drop, that's all. One drop too much, I call it. Now if we—or our rooms—had just happened to be underneath? Some excitement, eh?"

They circled the opening and approached the tower wall. Stern picked up the rough ladder, which had been shaken down from its place, and once more set it to the window through which they were to enter.

But even as Beatrice put her foot on the first rung, she started with a cry. Stern felt the grip of her trembling hand on his arm.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

"Look! *Look!*"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Immobile with astonishment and fear, she stood pointing out and away, to westward, toward the Hudson.

Stern's eyes followed her hand.

He tried to cry out, but only stammered some broken, unintelligible thing.

There, very far away and very small, yet clearly visible in swarms upon the inky-black expanse of waters, a hundred, a thousand little points of light were moving.

CHAPTER XV

PORTENTS OF WAR

STERN and Beatrice stood there a few seconds at the foot of the ladder, speechless, utterly at a loss for any words to voice the turmoil of confused thoughts awakened by this inexplicable apparition.

But all at once the girl, with a wordless cry, sank on her knees beside the vast looming bulk of the tower. She covered her face with both hands, and the tears of joy began to flow through her fingers.

"Saved—oh, we're saved!" she cried. "There *are* people—and they're coming for us!"

Stern glanced down at her, an inscrutable expression on his face, which had grown hard and set and ugly. His lips moved, as though he were saying something to himself; but no sound escaped them.

Then, quite suddenly, he laughed a mirthless laugh. There flashed back to him vividly the memory of the flint spearhead—and the gnawed leg-bone, cracked open so the marrow could be sucked out, all gashed with savage tooth-marks.

A certain creepy sensation began to develop along his spine. He felt a prickling on the nape of the neck, as the hair stirred there. Instinctively he reached for his revolver.

"So, then," he sneered at himself, "we're up against it, after all? And all my calculations about the world being swept clear, were so much punk? Well, well, this *is* interesting! Oh, I see it coming, all right—good and plenty—and soon!"

But the girl interrupted his ugly thoughts as he stood there straining his eyes out into the dark.

"How splendid! How glorious!" she cried. "Only to think that we're going to see people again! Can you imagine it?"

"Hardly."

"Why, what's the matter? You speak as though you weren't saved."

"I didn't mean to. It's—just surprise, I guess."

"Come! Let's signal them with a fire from the tower top. I'll help carry wood. Let's hurry down and meet them!"

Highly excited, the girl had got to her feet again, and now clutched the engineer's arm in burning eagerness.

"Let's go! Go—at once! This minute!"

But he restrained her.

"You don't really think that would be quite prudent, do you?" he asked. "Not just yet?"

"Why not?"

"Why, can't you see? We—that is, there is no way to tell—"

"But they're coming to save us, can't you see? Somehow, somewhere, they must have caught that signal. And shall we wait, and perhaps let them lose us, after all?"

"Certainly not. But first we—why, we ought to make quite sure, you understand. Sure that they—they're really civilized, you know."

"But they *must* be, to have read the wireless."

"Oh, you're counting on that, are you? Well, that's a big assumption. It won't do. No, we've got to go slow in this game. Got to wait. Wait, and see. Easy does it!"

He tried to speak boldly and with nonchalance, but the girl's keen ear detected at least a little of the emotion that was troubling him. She kept a moment's silence, while the quivering lights drew on and on, steadily, slowly, like a host of fireflies on the bosom of the night.

"Why don't you get the telescope, and see?" she asked, at length.

"No use. It isn't a night-glass. Couldn't see a thing."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But, anyhow, those lights mean men, don't they?"

"Naturally. But until we know what kind, we're better off right where we are. I'm willing to welcome the coming guest, all right, if he's peaceful. Otherwise, it's powder and ball, hot water, stones and things for him!"

The girl stared a moment at the engineer, while this new idea took root within her brain.

"You—you don't mean," she faltered at last, "that these may be *savages?*"

He started at the word. "What makes you think that?" he parried, striving to spare her all needless alarm.

She pondered a moment, while the fire-dots, like a shoal of swimming stars, drew slowly nearer, nearer the Manhattan shore.

"Tell me, are they savages?"

"How do I know?"

"It's easy enough to see you've got an opinion about it. You think they're savages, don't you?"

"I think it's very possible."

"And if so—what then?"

"What then? Why, in case they aren't mighty nice and kind, there'll be a hot time in the old town, that's all. And somebody'll get hurt. It won't be us!"

Beatrice asked no more, for a minute or two, but the engineer felt her fingers tighten on his arm.

"I'm with you, till the end!" she whispered.

There was another pregnant silence, while the night-wind stirred the girl's hair and wafted the warm feminine perfume of her to his nostrils. Stern took a long, deep breath. A sort of dizziness crept over him, as from a glass of wine on an empty stomach. The Call of Woman strove to master him, but he repelled it. And, watching the creeping lights, he spoke; spoke to himself as much as to the girl; spoke, lest he think too much.

"There's a chance, a mere possibility," said he, "that those boats, canoes, coracles or whatever they may be, belong to white people, far descendants of the few supposititious survivors of the cataclysm. There's some slight chance that these people may be civilized, or perhaps they are partly so.

"Why they're coming across the Hudson, at this time o' night, with what object and to what place, we can't even guess. All we can do is wait, and watch and—be ready for anything."

"For anything!" she echoed. "You've seen me shoot! You know!"

He took her hand, and pressed it. And silence fell again, as the long vigil started, there in the shadow of the tower, on the roof.

For about a quarter of an hour, neither spoke. Then at last Stern said:

"See, now! The lights seem to be winking out. The canoes must have come close in toward the shore of the island. They're being masked behind the trees. The people, whoever they are, will be landing directly now."

"And then?"

"Wait and see."

They resigned themselves to patience. The girl's breath came quickly as she watched. Even the engineer felt his heart throb with accelerated haste.

Now, far in the east, dim over the flat and dreary ruins of Long Island, the sky began to silver, through a thin veil of cirrus cloud. A pallid moon was rising. Far below, a breeze stirred the tree-fronds in Madison Forest. A bat staggered drunkenly about the tower, then reeled away into the gloom; and, high aloft, an owl uttered its melancholy plaint.

Beatrice shuddered.

"They'll be here pretty soon!" she whispered. "Hadn't we better go down, and get our guns? In case—"

"Time enough," he answered. "Wait a while."

"Listen! What's that?" she exclaimed suddenly, holding her breath.

Off to northward, dull, muffled, all but inaudible, they both heard a rhythmic pulsing, strangely barbaric.

"Heavens!" cried Stern. "War-drums! Tom-toms, as I live!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XVI

THE GATHERING OF THE HORDES

"TOM-TOMS? So they *are* savages?" exclaimed the girl, taking a quick breath. "But—what *then?*"

"Don't just know, yet. It's a fact, though; they're certainly savages. Two tribes, one with torches, one with drums. Two different kinds, I guess. And they're coming in here to parley or fight or something. Regular powwow on hand. Trouble ahead, whichever side wins!"

"For us?"

"That depends. Maybe we'll be able to lie hidden, here, till this thing blows over, whatever it may be. If not, and if they cut off our water-supply, well—"

He ended with a kind of growl. The sound gave Beatrice a strange sensation. She kept a moment's silence, then remarked:

"They're up around Central Park now, the drums are, don't you think so? How far do you make that?"

"Close on to two miles. Come, let's be moving."

In silence they climbed the shaky ladder, reached the tower stairs and descended the seven stories to their dwelling.

Here, the first thing Stern did was to strike a light, which he masked in a corner, behind a skin stretched like a screen from one wall to the other. By this illumination, very dim yet adequate, he minutely examined all their firearms.

He loaded every one to capacity and made sure all were in working order. Then he satisfied himself that the supply of cartridges was ample. These he laid carefully along by the windows overlooking Madison Forest, by the door leading into the suite of offices, and by the stair-head that gave access to the fifth floor.

Then he blew out the light again.

"Two revolvers, one shotgun, and one rifle, all told," said he. "All magazine arms. I guess that'll hold them for a while, if it comes down to brass tacks! How's your nerve, Beatrice?"

"Never better!" she whispered, from the dark. He saw the dim white blur that indicated her face, and it was very dear to him, all of a sudden—dearer, far, than he had ever realized.

"Good little girl!" he exclaimed, giving her the rifle. A moment his hand pressed hers. Then with a quick intake of breath, he strode over to the window and listened once more.

She followed.

"Much nearer, now!" he judged. "Hear *that*, will you?"

Again they listened.

Louder now the drums sounded, dull, ominous, pulsating like the hammering of a fever-pulse inside a sick man's skull. A dull, confused hum, a noise as of a swarming mass of bees, drifted downwind.

"Maybe they'll pass by?" whispered Beatrice.

"It's Madison Forest they're aiming at!" returned the engineer. "See there!"

He pointed to westward.

There, far off along the forest-lane of Fourteenth Street, a sudden gleam of light flashed out among the trees, vanished, reappeared, was joined by two, ten, a hundred others. And now the whole approach to Madison Forest, by several streets, began to sparkle with these *feux-follets*, weaving and flickering unsteadily toward the square.

Here, there, everywhere through the dense masses of foliage, the watchers could already see a dim and moving mass, fitfully illuminated by torches that now burned steady, now flared into red and smoky tourbillons of flame in the night-wind.

"Like monster glow-worms, crawling among the trees!" the girl exclaimed. "We could mow them down from here, already! God grant we shan't have to fight!"

"S-h-h-h! Wait and see what's up!"

Now, from the other horde, coming from the north, sounds of warlike preparation were growing ever louder.

With quicker beats the insistent tom-toms throbbed their rhythmic melancholy tune, hollow and dissonant. Then all at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once the drums ceased; and through the night air drifted a minor chant; a wail, that rose, fell, died, and came again, lagging as many strange voices joined it.

And from the square, below, a shrill, high-pitched, half-animal cry responded. Creeping shudders chilled the flesh along the engineer's backbone.

"What I need, now," he thought, "is about a hundred pounds of high-grade dynamite, or a gallon of nitroglycerin. Better still, a dozen capsules of my own invention, my 'Pulverite.'

"I guess that would settle things mighty quick. It would be the joker in this game, all right. Well, why not make some? With what chemicals I've got left, couldn't I work up a half-pint? Bottled in glass flasks, I guess it would turn the trick on 'em."

"Why, they look black!" the girl interrupted suddenly. "See there—and there?"

She pointed toward the spring. Stern saw moving shadows in the dark. Then, through an opening, he got a blurred impression of a hand, holding a torch. He saw a body, half-human.

The glimpse vanished, but he had seen enough.

"Black—yes, blue-black! They seem so, anyhow. And—why, did you see the *size* of them? No bigger than apes! Good Heaven!"

Involuntarily he shuddered. For now, like a dream-horde of hideous creatures seen in a nightmare, the torch-bearers had spread all through the forest at the base of the Metropolitan.

Away from the building out across by the spring and even to Fifth Avenue the mob extended, here thick, there thin, without order or coherence—a shifting, murmuring, formless, seemingly planless congeries of dull brutality.

Here or there, where the swaying of the trees parted the branches a little, the wavering lights brought some fragment of the mass to view.

No white thing showed anywhere. All was dark and vague. Indistinctly, waveringly as in a vision, dusky heads could be made out. There showed a naked arm, greasily shining for a second in the ruddy glow which now diffused itself through the whole wood. Here the watchers saw a glistening back; again, an out-thrust leg, small and crooked, apelike and repulsive.

And once again the engineer got a glimpse of a misshapen hand, a long, lean, hideous hand that clutched a spear. But, hardly seen, it vanished into obscurity once more.

"Seems as though malformed human members, black and bestial, had been flung at random into a ghastly kaledioscope, turned by a madman!" whispered Stern. The girl, answering nothing, peered out in fascinated horror.

Up, up to the watchers rose a steady droning hum; and from the northward, ever louder, ever clearer, came now the war-song of the attacking party. The drums began again, suddenly. A high-pitched, screaming laugh echoed and died among the woods beyond the ruins of Twenty-eighth Street.

Still in through the western approaches of the square, more and more lights kept straggling. Thicker and still more thick grew the press below. Now the torch-glow was strong enough to cast its lurid reflections on the vacant-staring wrecks of windows and walls, gaping like the shattered skulls of a civilization which was no more. To the nostrils of the man and woman upfloated an acrid, pitchy smell. And birds, dislodged from sleep, began to zigzag about, aimlessly, with frightened cries. One even dashed against the building, close at hand; and fell, a fluttering, broken thing, to earth.

Stern, with a word of hot anger fingered his revolver. But Beatrice laid her hand upon his arm.

"Not yet!" she begged.

He glanced down at her, where she stood beside him at the empty embrasure of the window. The dim light from the vast and empty overarch of sky, powdered with a wonder of stars, showed him the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vague outline of her face. She was wistful and pale, yet very brave. A sudden tenderness welled through Stern.

He put his arm around her, and for a moment her head lay on his breast.

But only a moment.

For, all at once, a snarling cry rang through the wood; and, with a northward surge of the torch-bearers, a confused tumult of shrieks, howls, simian chatterings and dull blows, the battle joined between those two vague, strange forces down below in the black forest.

CHAPTER XVII

STERN'S RESOLVE

HOW long it lasted, what its meaning, its details, the watchers could not tell. Impossible, from that height and in that gloom, broken only by an occasional pale gleam of moonlight through the drifting cloud-rack, to judge the fortunes of this primitive war.

They knew not the point at issue nor yet the tide of victory or loss. Only they knew that back and forth the torches flared, the war-drums boomed and rattled, the yelling, slaughtering, demoniac hordes surged in a swirl of bestial murder-lust.

And so time passed, and the drums grew fewer, yet the torches flared on; and, as the first gray dawn went fingering up the sky, there came a break, a flight, a merciless pursuit.

Dimly the man and woman, up aloft, saw things that ran and shrieked and were cut down—saw things, there in the forest, that died even as they killed, and mingled the howl of triumph with the bubbling gasp of dissolution.

"Ugh! A beast war!" The engineer shuddered, and at length drew Beatrice away from the window. "Come, it's getting light, again. It's too clear, now—come away!"

She yielded, waking as it were from the horrid fascination that had held her spell-bound. Down she sat on her bed of furs, covered her eyes with her hands, and for a while remained quite motionless. Stern watched her. And again his hand sought the revolver-butt.

"I ought to have waded into the bunch, long ago," he thought. "We both ought to have. What it's all about, who could tell? But it's an outrage against the night itself, against the world, even dead though it be. If it hadn't been for wasting good ammunition for nothing—"

A curious, guttural whine, down there in the forest, attracted his attention. He strode over to the window and peered down once again.

A change had come upon the scene, a sudden, radical change. The sounds of combat rose no more; but now, there sounded a dull, conclamant murmur as of victory and preparation for some ghastly rite.

Already in the center of the wood, hard by the spring, a little fire had been lighted. Even as Stern looked, dim, moving figures heaped on wood. The engineer saw whirling droves of sparks spiral upward; he saw dense smoke, followed by a larger flame.

And, grouped around this, already some hundreds of the now paling torches cast their livid glare.

Off to one side he could just distinguish what seemed to be a group engaged in some activity—but what this might be, he could not determine. Yet, all at once a scream of pain burst out therefrom; and then a gasping cry that ended quickly and did not come again.

Another shriek, and still a third; and now into the leaping flames some dark, misshapen things were flung, and a great shout arose.

Then rose, also, a shrill, singsong whine; and suddenly drums roared, now with a different cadence.

"Listen!" said the engineer. "The torchmen must have exterminated the other bunch, and got possession of the drums. They're using 'em, themselves—and badly!"

By the firelight vague shapes came and went, their shadows grotesquely flung against the leafy screens. The figures

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quickened their paces and their gestures; then suddenly, with cries, flung themselves into wild activity. And all about the fire Stern saw a wheeling, circling, eddying mob of black and frightful shapes.

"The swine!" he breathed. "Wait—wait till I make a pint or two of Pulverite!"

Even as he spoke, the concourse grew quiet with expectancy. A silence fell upon the forest. Something was being led forward toward the fire—something for which the others all made way.

The wind freshened. With it, the volume of smoke increased. Another frightened bird, cheeping forlornly, fluttered above the tree-tops.

Then a cry rose, a shriek long-drawn and ghastly, that climbed, climbed till it broke in a bubbling, choking gasp.

Came a sharp clicking sound, a quick scuffle, a grunt; then silence once more.

And all at once the drums crashed; and the dance began again, madder, more obscenely hideous than ever.

"Voodoo!" gulped Stern. "Obeah-work! The quicker I get my Pulverite to working, the better!"

Undecided no longer, determined now on a course of definite action without further delay, the engineer turned back into the room. Upon his forehead stood a cold and prickling sweat, of horror and disgust. But he forced a smile to his lips, as, in the half light of the red and windy dawn, he drew close to Beatrice.

Then all at once, to his unspeakable relief, he saw the girl was sleeping.

Utterly worn out, exhausted and spent with the long strain, the terrible fatigues of the past thirty-six hours, she had lain down and had dropped off to sleep. There she lay at full length. Very beautiful she looked, half seen in the morning gloom. One arm crossed her full bosom; the other pillowed her cheek. And, bending close, Stern watched her a long minute.

With strange emotion he heard her even breathing; he caught the perfume of her warm, ripe womanhood. Never had she seemed to him so perfect, so infinitely to be loved, to be desired.

And at thought of that beast-horde in the wood below, at realization of what *might* be, if they two should chance to be discovered and made captive, his face went hard as iron. An ugly, savage look possessed him, and he clenched both fists.

For a brief second he stooped still closer; he laid his lips soundlessly, gently upon her hair. And when he stood up again the look in his eyes boded scant good to anything that might threaten the sleeping girl.

"So, now to work!" he said.

He stepped quietly into his own room, his room where he had collected his various implements and chemicals. First of all he set out, on the floor, a two-quart copper tea-kettle; and beside this, choosing carefully, he ranged the necessary ingredients for a "making" of his secret explosive.

"Now, the wash-out water," he said, taking another larger dish.

He walked over to the water-pail. Then he stopped, suddenly, frowning a black and puzzled frown.

"What?" he exclaimed. "But—there isn't a pint left, all together! H-m! Now then, here is a situation!"

Hastily he recalled how the great labors of the previous day, the wireless experiments and all, had prevented him from going out to the spring to replenish their supply. Now, though he bitterly cursed himself for his neglect, that did no good. The fact remained, there was no water.

"Scant pint, maybe!" he said. "And I've got to have a gallon, at the very least. To say nothing of drink for two people! *And* the horde, there, camping round the spring. Je-*ru*-salem!"

Softly he whistled to himself; then, trying to solve this vital, unexpected problem, fell to pacing the floor.

Day, slowly looming through the window, showed his features set and hard. Close at hand, the breath of morning winds stirred the treetops. But of the usual busy twitter and gossip of birds among the branches, now there was none. For down below there, in the forest, the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ghoulish vampire revels still held sway.

Stern, at a loss, swore hotly under his breath.

Then suddenly he found himself; he came to a decision.

"I'm going down. I'm going down, to see!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SUPREME QUESTION

NOW that his course lay clear before him, the man felt an instant and a huge relief. Whatever the risks, the dangers, this adventuring was better than a mere inaction, beseiged there in the tower by that ugly, misshapen horde.

First of all, as he had done on the first morning of the awakening, when he had left the girl asleep, he wrote a brief communication to forestall any possible alarm on her part.

This, scrawled with charcoal on a piece of smooth hide, ran:

> Have had to go down to get water and lay of the land. Absolutely necessary. Don't be afraid. Am between you and *them*, well armed. Will leave you both the rifle and the shotgun. Stay here, and have no fear. Will come back as soon as possible.
>
> ALLAN.

He laid this primitive letter where, on awakening, she could not fail to see it. Then, making sure again that all the arms were fully charged, he put the rifle and the gun close beside his "note," and saw to it that his revolvers lay loosely and conveniently in the holsters she had made for him.

One more reconnaissance he made at the front window. This done, he took the water-pail and set off quietly down the stairs. His feet were noiseless as a cat's.

At every landing he stopped, listening intently. Down, ever down, story by story he crept.

To his chagrin—though he had half expected worse—he found that the boiler-explosion of the previous night had really made the way impassable, from the third story downward. These lowest flights of steps had been so badly broken, that now they gave no access to the arcade.

All that remained of them was a jumbled mass of wreckage, below the gaping hole in the third-floor hallway, where they had joined.

"That means," said Stern to himself, "I've got to find another way down. And quick, too!"

He set about the task with a will. Exploration of several lateral corridors resulted in nothing; but at last good fortune led him to stairs that had remained comparatively uninjured. And down these he stole, pail in one hand, revolver ready in the other, listening, creeping, every sense alert.

He found himself, at length, in the shattered and dismembered wreckage of the once-famed "Marble Court." Fallen now were the carved and gilded pillars; gone, save here or there for a fragment, the balustrade. One of the huge newel-posts at the bottom lay on the cracked floor of marble squares; the other, its metal chandelier still clinging to it, lolled drunkenly askew.

But Stern had neither time nor inclination to observe these woeful changes. Instead, he pressed still forward, and, after a certain time of effort, found himself in the arcade once more.

Here the affects of the explosion were very marked. A ghastly hole opened into the subcellar below; masses of fallen ceiling blocked the way; and every pane of glass in the shop-fronts had shattered down. Smoke had blackened everything. Ashes and dirt, *ad infinitum*, completed the dreary picture, seen there by the still insufficient light of morning.

But Stern cared nothing for all this. It even cheered him a trifle.

"In case of a mix-up," he thought, "there couldn't be a better place for ambushing these infernal cannibals—for mowing them down, wholesale—for sending them skyhooting to Tophet, in bunches."

And with a grim smile, he worked his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way cautiously toward Madison Forest and the pine-tree gate.

As he drew near, his care redoubled. His grip on the revolver-butt tightened.

"They mustn't see me first," he said to himself.

Into a littered wreck of an office at the right of the exit he crept silently. Here, he knew, the outer wall of the building was deeply fissured. He hoped he might be able to find some peep-hole where, unseen, he could peer out on the bestial mob.

He set his water-pail down, and on hands and knees, hardly breathing, taking infinite pains not to stir the loose rubbish on the floor, not even to crunch the fallen lumps of mortar, he crawled forward.

Yes, there was a glimmer of light through the crack in the wall. Stern silently wormed in between a corroded steel I-beam and a cracked granite block, about the edges of which the small green tendrils of a vine had laid their hold.

This way, then that, he craned his neck. And all at once, with a sharp breath, he grew rigid in horrified, eager attention.

Though, from the upper stories and by torch-light, he had already formed some notion of the horde, he had in no wise been prepared for what he now was actually beholding through a screen of sumacs that grew along the wall outside.

"Why—why, this can't be real!" he thought. "It must be some darned hallucination. Am I awake? What the deuce!"

Paling a little, his eyes staring, mouth agape, the engineer stayed there for a long minute, unable to credit his own senses. For now he, he, the only white man living in the twenty-eighth century, was witnessing the strangest sight that ever a civilized being had looked upon in the whole history of the world.

No vision of DeQuincey, no drug-born dream of Poe could equal it for grisly fascination. Frankenstein, Maupassant's "Horla," all the fantastic literary monsters of the past faded to tawdry, childish bogeys beside the actual observations of Stern, the engineer, the man of science and cold fact.

"Why, what are these?" he asked himself, shuddering despite himself at the mere sight of what lay outside there in the forest. "What? Men? Animals? What—*what are these things?*"

CHAPTER XIX

THE UNKNOWN RACE

AN ALMOST irresistible repugnance, a compelling aversion, more of the spirit than of the flesh, instantly seized the man at sight of even the few members of the horde which lay within his view.

Though he had been expecting to see something disgusting, something grotesque and horrible, his mind was wholly unprepared for the real hideousness of these creatures, now seen by the ever-strengthening light of day.

And slowly, as he stared, the knowledge dawned on him that here was a monstrous problem to face, far greater and more urgent than he had forseen. Here were factors not yet understood; here, the product of forces till then not even dreamed of by his scientific mind.

"I certainly did expect to find a small race," he thought. "Small, and possibly misshapen, the descendants, maybe, of a few survivors of the cataclysm. But this—"

And again, fascinated by the ghastly spectacle, he laid his eye to the chink in the wall, and looked.

A tenuous fog still drifted slowly among the forest trees, veiling the deeper recesses. Yet, near at hand, within the limited segment of vision which the engineer commanded, everything could be made out with reasonable distinctness.

Some of the things (for so he mentally named them, knowing of no better term) were squatting, lying or moving about, quite close at hand. The fire by the spring had now almost died down. It was evident that the revel had ceased, and that the horde was settling down to rest—glutted, no doubt, with the raw and bleeding flesh of the conquered foe.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stern could easily have poked his revolver-muzzle through the crack in the wall and shot down many of them. For an instant the temptation lay strong upon him to get rid of at least a dozen or a score; but prudence restrained his hand.

"No use!" he told himself. "Nothing to be gained by that. But, once I get my proper chance at them—"

And again, striving to observe them with the cool and calculating eye of science, he studied the shifting, confused picture out there before him.

Then he realized that the feature which, above all else, struck him as ghastly and unnatural, was the *color* of the things.

"Not black, not even brown," he said. "I thought so, last night, but daylight corrects the impression. Not red, either, or copper-colored. *What* color, then? For Heaven's sake, what?"

He could hardly name it. Through the fog, it struck him as a dull slate-gray, almost a blue. He recalled that once he had seen a child's modeling-clay, much-used and very dirty, of the same shade, which certainly had no designation in the chromatic scale. Some of the things were darker, some a trifle lighter—these, no doubt, the younger ones—but they all partook of this same characteristic tint. And the skin, moreover, looked dull and sickly, rather mottled and wholly repulsive, very like that of a Mexican dog.

Like that dog's hide, too, it was sparsely overgrown with whitish bristles. Here or there, on the bodies of some of the larger things, bulbous warts had formed, somewhat like those on a toad's back; and on these warts the bristles clustered thickly. Stern saw the hair, on the neck of one of these creatures, crawl and rise like a jackal's, as a neighbor jostled him; and from the thing's throat issued a clicking grunt of purely animal resentment.

"Merciful Heavens! What are they?" Stern wondered again, utterly baffled for any explanation. "What can they be?"

Another, in the group close by, attracted his attention. It was lying on its side, asleep maybe, its back directly toward the engineer. Stern clearly saw the narrow shoulders and the thin, long arms, covered with that white bristling hair.

One sprawling, spatulate, clawlike hand lay on the forest moss. The twisted little apelike legs, disproportionately short, were curled up; the feet, prehensile and with a well-marked thumb on each, twitched a little now and then. The head, enormously too big for the body, to which it was joined by a thin neck, seemed to be scantily covered with a fine, curling down, of a dirty yellowish drab color.

"What a target!" thought the engineer. "At this distance, with my .38, I could drill it without half trying!"

All at once, one of the group sat up, shoved away a burned-out torch, and yawned with a noisy, doglike whine. Stern got a quick yet definite glimpse of the sharp canine teeth; he saw that the thing's fleshless lips and retreating chin were caked with dried blood. The tongue he saw was long and lithe and apparently rasped.

Then the creature stood up, balancing on its absurd bandy legs, a spear in its hand—a flint-pointed spear of crude workmanship.

At full sight of the face, Stern shrank for a moment.

"I've known savages, as such," thought he. "I understand them. I know animals. They're animals, that's all. But this creature—merciful Heavens!"

And at the realization that it was neither beast nor man, the engineer's blood chilled within his veins.

Yet he forced himself still to look and to observe unseen. There was practically no forehead at all. The nose was but a formless lump of cartilage, the ears large and pendulous and hairy. Under heavy brow-ridges, the dull, lack-luster eyes blinked stupidly, bloodshot and cruel. As the mouth closed, Stern noted now the under incisors closed up over the upper lip, showing a gleam of dull yellowish ivory; a slaver dripped from the doglike corner of the mouth.

Stern shivered, and drew back.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He realized now that he was in the presence of an unknown semihuman type, different in all probability from any that had ever yet existed. It was less their bestiality that disgusted him, than their utter, hopeless, age-long degeneration from the man-standard.

What race had they descended from? He could not tell. He thought he could detect a trace of the Mongol in the region of the eye, in the cheek-bones and the general contour of what, by courtesy, might be called the face. There were indications, also, of the negroid type, still stronger. But the color—whence could that have come? And the general characteristics, were not these distinctly simian?

Again he looked. And now one of the pot-bellied little horrors, shambling and bulbous-kneed, was scratching its warty, blue hide with its black claws as it trailed along through the forest. It looked up, grinning and jabbering; Stern saw the teeth that should have been molars. With repulsion he noted that they were not flat-crowned, but sharp, like a dog's. Through the blue lips they clearly showed.

"Nothing herbivorous here," thought the scientist. "All flesh-food of—who knows what sort!"

Quickly his mind ran over the outlines of the problem. He knew at once that these things were lower than any human race ever recorded, far lower even than the famed Australian bushmen, who could not even count as high as five. Yet, strange and more strange, they had the use of fire, of the tom-tom, of some sort of voodooism, of flint, of spears, and of a rude sort of tanning—witness the loin-clouts of hide which they all wore.

"Worse than any troglodyte!" he told himself. "Far lower than De Quatrefage's Neanderthal man, to judge from the cephalic index—worse than that Java skull, the *pithecantroupus erectus,* itself! And I—am with my living eyes beholding them!"

A slight sound, there behind him in the room, set his heart flailing madly.

His hand froze to the butt of the automatic as he drew back from the cleft in the wall, and, staring, whirled about, ready to shoot on the second.

Then he started back. His jaw dropped, his eyes widened and his arm fell limply. The revolver swung loosely at his side.

"*You?*" he breathed soundlessly. "You —*here?*"

There at the door of the great empty room, magnificent in her tiger-skin, the rifle gripped in her supple hand, stood Beatrice.

CHAPTER XX

THE CURIOSITY OF EVE

THE girl peered eagerly at Stern a second, as though to make quite sure he was not hurt in any way, to satisfy herself that he was safe and sound.

Then with a little gasp of relief, she ran to him. Her sandaled feet lightly disturbed the rubbish on the floor; dust rose. Stern checked her with an upraised hand.

"Back! Back! Go back, quick!" he formed the words of command on his trembling lips. The idea of this girl's close proximity to the beast-horde terrified him, for the moment. "Back! What on earth are you here for?"

"I—I woke up. I found you gone," she whispered.

"Yes, but didn't you read my letter? This is no place for you."

"I had to come. How could I stay up there, alone, when you—were—oh! Maybe in danger—maybe in need of me?"

"Come!" he commanded, in his alarm heedless of the look she gave him. He took her hand. "Come, we must get out of this. It's too—too near the—"

"The *what?* What is it, Allan? Tell me, have you seen them? Do you know?"

Even excited as the engineer was, he realized that for the first time the girl had called him by his Christian name. Not even the perilous situation could stifle the thrill that ran through him at the sound of it. But all he answered was:

"No, I don't know what to call them. Have no idea, as yet. I've seen them, yes;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but what they are, Heaven knows—maybe!"

"Let me see, too," she pleaded eagerly. "Is it through that crack in the wall? Is that the place to look?"

She moved toward it, her face blanched with excitement, eyes shining, lips parted. But Stern held her back. He took her by the shoulder.

"No, no, little girl," he whispered. "You mustn't. It's too fierce!"

She looked up at him, not knowing what to think or say for a moment. Their eyes met, there in that wrecked and riven place, lighted by the dull, misty, morning gray. Then Stern spoke, for in her gaze were questions unnumbered.

"I'd much rather you wouldn't look out at them; not just yet," he said, speaking very low, fearful lest the murmur of his voice might penetrate the wall. "Just what they are, frankly, there's no telling."

"You mean—"

"Come back into the arcade, where we'll be safer from discovery, and we can talk. Not here. Come!"

She obeyed. Together they retreated to the inner court.

"You see," he commented, nodded at the empty water-pail. "I haven't been to the spring yet. Not very likely to get there for a while, either, unless—well, unless something pretty radical happens. I think these chaps have settled down for a good long stay in their happy hunting-ground, after the fight and the big feast. It's sort of a notion I've got, that this place, here, is some ancient ceremonial ground of theirs."

"Probably the spring is a regular voodoo hangout. The row, last night, must have been a sort of periodic argument to see who was going to run the show."

"But," the girl exclaimed in alarm, "if they do stay a while, what about us? We've simply got to have water!"

"True enough. And, inasmuch as we can't drink brine and don't know where there's any other spring, it looks as though we'd either have to make up to these fellows or wade into them, doesn't it? But we'll get water safe enough, never fear. Just now, for the immediate present, I want to get my bearings a little, before going to work. They seem to be resting up, a bit, after their pleasant little *soirée*. Now, if they'd only all go to sleep, it'd be a walk-over."

The girl looked at him, very seriously.

"You mustn't go out there alone, whatever happens!" she exclaimed. "I just won't let you! But tell me," she questioned again, "how much have you really found out about them, whatever they are?"

"Not much. They seem to be part of a nomadic race of half human things; that's about all I can tell as yet. Perhaps all the white and yellow peoples perished utterly in the cataclysm, leaving only a few scattered blacks. You know *blacks* are immune to several germ-infections that destroy other races."

"Yes. And you mean—"

"It's quite possible these fellows are the far-distant and degenerate survivors of that other time."

"So the whole world may have gone to pieces the way Liberia and Haiti and Santo Domingo once did, when white rule ceased?"

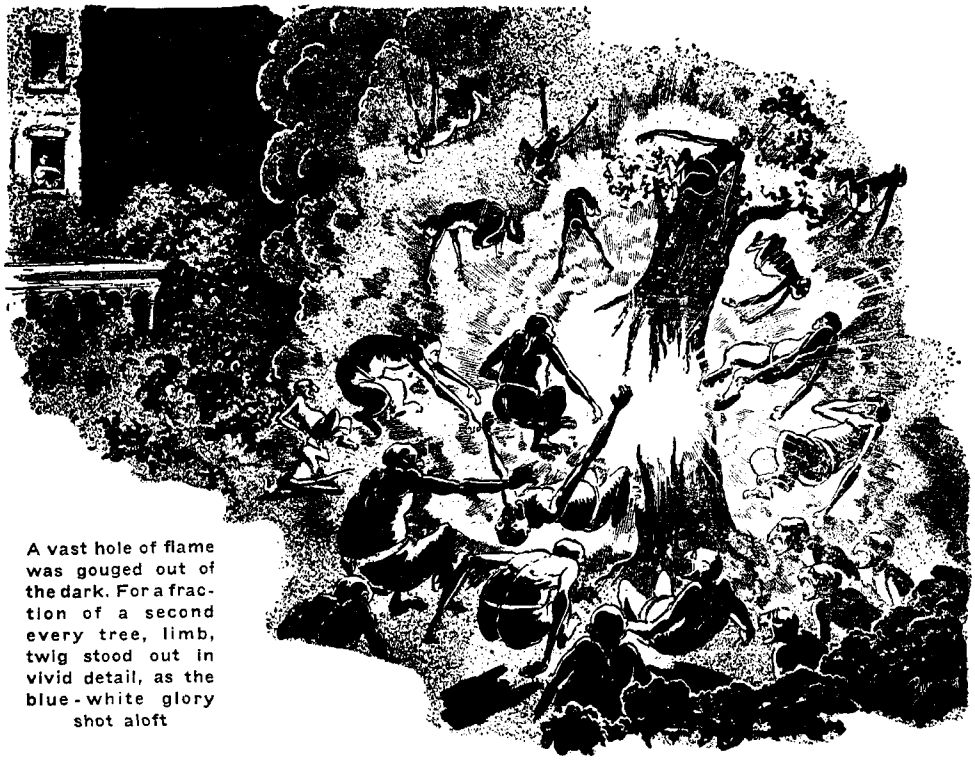
"Yes, only a million times more so. I see you know your history. If my hypothesis is correct, and only a few thousand blacks escaped, you can easily imagine what must have happened.

"For a while, maybe fifty or a hundred years, they may have kept some sort of dwindling civilization. Probably the English language continued for a while, in ever more and more corrupt forms. There may have been some pretense of maintaining the school system, railroads, steamship lines, newspapers and churches, banks and all the rest of that wonderfully complex system we once knew. But after a while—"

"Yes? What then?"

"Why, the whole false shell crumbled, that's all. It must have. History shows it. It didn't take a hundred years after Toussaint L'Ouverture and Dessalines, in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A vast hole of flame was gouged out of the dark. For a fraction of a second every tree, limb, twig stood out in vivid detail, as the blue-white glory shot aloft

Haiti, for the blacks to shuck off French civilization and go back to grass huts and human sacrifice—to make another little Central Africa out of it, in the backwoods districts, at any rate. And *we*—have had eight hundred years, nearly a thousand, Beatrice, since the white man died."

She thought a moment, and shook her head.

"What a story," she murmured, "what an incredible, horribly fascinating story that would make, if it could ever be known, or written. Think of the ebb-tide of everything. Railroads abandoned and falling to pieces, cities crumbling, ships no longer sailing, language and arts and letters forgotten, agriculture shrinking back to a few patches of corn and potatoes and then to nothing at all, everything changing, dying, stopping. And the ever-increasing yet degenerating people leaving the city ruins, which they could not rebuild—taking to the fields, the forests, the mountains—going down, down, down, back toward the primeval state, down through barbarism, through savagery, to—what?"

"To what we see," the engineer answered bitterly. "To animals, retaining by ghastly mockery some use of fire and of tools. All this, according to one theory."

"Is there another?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, and I wish we had the shade of Darwin, of Haeckel or of Clodd here with us to help us work it out."

"How do you imagine it?"

"Why, like this. Maybe, after all, even the entire black race was swept out along with the others, too. Perhaps you and I were really the only two human beings left alive anywhere in the world."

"Yes, but in that case, how—"

"How came *they* here? Listen! May they not be the product of some entirely different process and development? May not some animal stock, under changed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

environment, have easily evolved them? May not some other semihuman or near-human race be now in process of arising, here on earth, eventually to conquer and subdue it all again?"

For a moment she made no answer. Her breath came a little quickly as she tried to grasp the full significance of this tremendous concept.

"In a million years or so," the engineer continued, "may not the descendants of these things once more be men, or something very like them? In other words, aren't we possibly witnessing the recreation of the human type? Aren't *these* the real *pithecanthropi erecti,* rather than the brown-skinned, reddish-haired creatures of the biological textbooks? There's our problem."

She made no answer, but a sudden overmastering curiosity leaped into her eyes.

"Let me see them for myself. I must. I will."

And before he could detain her, the girl had started back into the room whence they had come.

"No, no! No, Beatrice!" he whispered, but she paid no heed to him. Across the littered floor she made her way. And by the time Stern could reach her side, she had set her face to the long, crumbling crack in the wall and with a burning eagerness was peering out into the forest.

CHAPTER XXI

EVE BECOMES AN AMAZON

STERN laid a hand on her shoulder, striving to draw her away. This spectacle, it seemed to him, was no fit sight for her to gaze on. But she shrugged her shoulders as if to say: "I'm not a child. I'm your equal, now, and I must see." So the engineer desisted. And he, too, set his eye to the twisting aperture.

At sight of the narrow segment of forest visible through it, and of the several members of the horde, a strong revulsion came upon him.

Up welled a deep-seated love for the memory of the race of men and women as they once had been—the people of the other days. Stern almost seemed to behold them again, those tall, athletic, straight-limbed men; those lithe, deep-breasted women, fair-skinned and with luxuriant hair; all alike now plunged for nearly a thousand years in the abyss of death and of eternal oblivion.

Never before had the engineer realized how dear, how infinitely close to him his own race had been. Never had he so admired its diverse types of force and beauty, as now, now when all were but a dream.

"Ugh!" he thought, disgusted beyond measure at the sight before him. "And all *these* things are just as much alike as so many ants in a hill. I question if they've got the reason and the socialized intelligence of ants."

He heard the girl breathe quick, as she, too, watched what was going on outside. A certain change had taken place there. The mist had somewhat thinned away, blown by the freshening breeze through Madison Forest and by the higher-rising sun. Both watchers could now see further into the woods; and both perceived that the horde was for the most part disposing itself to sleep.

Only a few vague, uncertain figures were now moving about, with a strangely unsteady gait, weak-kneed and simian.

In the nearest group, which Stern had already had a chance to study, all but one of the creatures had lain down. The man and woman could quite plainly hear the raucous and bestial snoring of some half-dozen of the gorged things.

"Come away, you've seen enough, more than enough," he whispered in the girl's ear.

She shook her head.

"No, no," she answered, under her breath. "How horrible—and yet, how wonderful."

Then a misfortune happened; trivial yet how direly pregnant.

For Stern, trying to readjust his position, laid his right hand on the wall above his head.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A little fragment of loose marble, long since ready to fall, dislodged itself and bounced with a sharp click against the steel I-beam over which they both were peeking.

The sound, perhaps, was no greater than you would make in snapping an ordinary lead-pencil in your fingers; yet on the instant three of the things raised their bulbous and exaggerated heads in an attitude of intense, suspicious listening. Plain to see that their senses, at least, excelled those of the human being, even as a dog's might.

The individual which, alone of them all, had been standing, wheeled suddenly round and made a step or two toward the building. Both watchers saw him with terrible directness, there among the sumacs and birches, with the beauty of which he made a shocking contrast.

Plain now was the simian aspect, plain the sidelong and uncertain gait, bent back and crooked legs, the long pendulous arms and dully ferocious face.

And as the thing listened, its hair bristling, it thrust its villainous, apelike head well forward. The mouth fell open, revealing the dog-teeth and the blue, shriveled-looking gums.

A wrinkle creased the low, dull brow. Watching with horrified fascination, Stern and Beatrice saw—and heard—the creature sniff the air, as though taking up some scent of danger or of the hunt.

Then up came the right arm; they saw the claw-hand with a spear, poise itself a moment. From the open mouth burst with astounding force and suddenness a snarling yowl, inarticulate, shrill, horrible beyond all thinking.

An instant agitation took place all through the forest. The watchers could see only a small, fan-like space of it—and even this, only a few rods from the building—yet by the confused, vague noise that began, they knew the alarm had been given to the whole horde.

Here, there, the cry was repeated. A shifting, moving sound began. In the visible group, the things were getting to their handlike feet, standing unsteadily on their loose-skinned, scaly legs, gawping about them, whining and clicking with disgusting sounds.

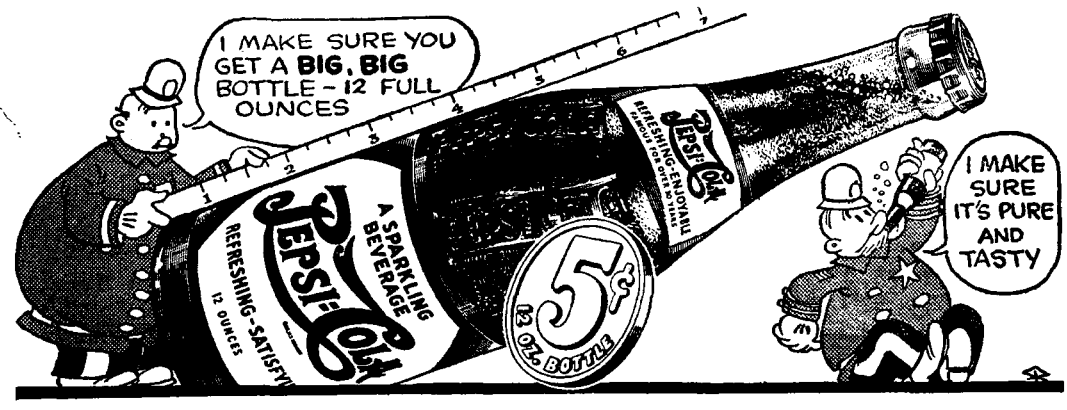
Sudden, numbing fear seized Beatrice. Now for the first time she realized the imminent peril; now she regretted her headstrong insistence on seeing the horde at close range.

She turned, pale and shaken; and her trembling hand sought the engineer's.

He still, for a moment, kept his eye to the crack, fascinated by the very horror of the sight. Then all at once another figure shambled into view.

"A female one," he realized, shuddering. Too monstrously hideous, this sight, to be endured. With a gasp, he drew back.

He drew his arm about Beatrice. Together, almost as soundlessly as wraiths, they stole away, out through the office, out to the hallway, into the dim light of the arcade once more.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here, for a few moments, they knew that they were safe. Retreat through the Marble Court and up the stairs was fairly clear. There was but one entrance open into the arcade, the one through Pine Tree Gate; and this was blocked so narrowly by the giant bole that Stern knew there could be no general mob-rush through it—no attack which he could not for a while hold back, so long as his ammunition and the girl's should last.

They breathed more freely now. Most of the tumult outside had been cut off from their hearing, by the retirement into the arcade. They paused, to plan their course.

The girl looked eagerly at Stern.

"Oh, oh Allan—how horrible!" she whispered. "It was all my fault for having been so headstrong, for having insisted on a look at them. Forgive me."

"S-h!" he cautioned again. "No matter about that. The main thing, now, is whether we attack, or wait."

"Attack? Now?"

"I don't think much of going upstairs without that pail of water. We'll have a frightful time with thirst, to say nothing of not being able to make the pulverite. Water we must have. If it weren't for your being here, I'd mighty soon wade into that bunch and see who won. But—well, I haven't any right to endanger—"

Beatrice seized his hand and pulled him toward the doorway.

"Come on!" she cried. "If you and I aren't a match for *them,* we don't deserve to live, that's all. You know how I can shoot, now! Come along!"

Her eyes gleamed with the light of battle, battle for liberty, for life; her cheeks glowed with the tides of generous blood that coursed beneath the skin. Never had Stern beheld her half so beautiful, so regal in that clinging, barbaric Bengal robe of black and yellow, caught at the throat with the clasp of raw gold.

A sudden impulse seized him, dominant, resistless. For a brief moment he detained her; he held her back; his arm tightened about her supple body.

She raised her face in wonder. He bent, a little, and kissed her rapturously on the forehead. "Thank God for such a comrade and a—friend," he said.

CHAPTER XXII

GODS!

SOME few minutes later, together they approached Pine Tree Gate, leading directly out into the horde.

The girl, rosier than ever, held her rifle loosely in the hollow of her bare, warm right arm. One of Stern's revolvers lay in its holster. The other balanced itself in his right hand. His left held the precious water-pail, so vital now to all their plans and hopes.

Girt in his garb of fur, belted and sandaled, well over six feet tall and broad of shoulder, the man was magnificent. His red beard and mustache, close-cropped, gave him a savage air that now well fitted him. For Stern was mad—mad clear through.

That Beatrice should suffer in any way, even from temporary thirst, raised up a savage resentment in his breast. The thought that perhaps it might not be possible to gain access to the spring at all, that these foul things might try to blockade them and siege them to death, wrought powerfully on him.

For himself he cared nothing. The girl it was who now preoccupied his every thought. And as they made their way through the litter of the explosion, toward the exit, slowly and cautiously, he spied out every foot of the place for possible danger.

If fight he must, he knew now it would be a brutal, utterly merciless fight—slaughter, extermination without any limit, to the end.

But there was scant time for thought. Already they could see daylight glimmering in through the gate, past the massive column of the conifer. Daylight—and with it came a thin and acrid smoke—and sounds of the uproused horde in Madison Forest.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Slow! Slow, now!" whispered Stern. "Don't let them know a thing until we've got 'em covered. If we surprise 'em just right, who knows but the whole infernal mob may duck and run? Don't shoot till you have to; but when you do—"

"I know," she breathed.

Then, all at once, they were at the gate, at the big tree, standing out there in the open, on the thick carpet of pine-spills.

And before them lay the mossy, shaded forest aisles—with what a horror camped all through the peaceful, wondrous place.

"Oh!" gasped Beatrice. The engineer stopped as though frozen. His hand tightened on the revolver-butt till the knuckles whitened. And thus, face to face with the horde, they stood for a long minute.

Neither of them realized exactly the details of that first impression. The narrow slit of view which they had already got through the crack in the wall had only very imperfectly prepared them for any understanding of what these things really were, *en masse*.

But both Beatrice and the engineer understood, even at the first moment of their exit there, that they had entered an adventure whereof the end could not be foreseen. That here before them lay possibilities infinitely more serious than any they had contemplated.

For one thing, they had underestimated the numbers of the horde. They had thought, perhaps, there might be five hundred in all.

The torches had certainly numbered no more than that. But now they realized that the torch-bearers had been but a very small fraction of the whole. For, as their eyes swept out through the forest, whence the fog had almost wholly risen, they beheld a moving, swarming mass of the creatures on every hand. A mass that seemed to extend on, on to indefinite vistas. A mass that moved, clicked, shifted, grunted, stank, snarled, quarreled. A mass of frightful hideousness, of inconceivable menace.

The girl's first impulse was to turn, to retreat back into the building once more; but her native courage checked it. For Stern, she saw, had no such purpose.

Surprised though he was, he stood there like a rock, head up, revolver ready, every muscle tense and ready for whatsoever might befall. And through the girl there flashed a thrill of admiration for this virile, indomitable man, coping with every difficulty, facing every peril—for her sake.

Yet the words he uttered now were not of classic heroism. They were simple, colloquial, inelegant. For Stern, his eyes blazing, said only:

"We're in bad, girl! They're on—we've got to bluff—bluff like the devil!"

Have you ever seen a herd of cattle on the prairie, a herd of thousands, shift and face and, as by instinct, lower their horned heads against some enemy—a wolf-pack maybe?

You know then, how this horde of dwarfish, blue, warty, misformed little horrors woke to the presence of the unknown enemy.

Already half alarmed by the warning given by the one, which, near the crack in the wall, had sniffed the intruders and had howled, the pack now broke in commotion. Stern and Beatrice saw a confused upheaving, a shifting and a tumult. They heard a yapping outcry. The long thin spears began to bristle.

And all at once, as a dull, ugly hornet-hum rose through the wood, they knew the moment for quick action was upon them.

"Here goes!" Stern cried, raging. "Let's see how this will strike the hell-hounds!"

His face white with passion and with loathing hate he raised the automatic. He aimed at none of the pack, for, angry as he was, he realized that the time was not yet come for killing, if other means to reach the spring could possibly avail.

Instead he pointed the ugly blue muzzle up toward the branches of a maple, under which a dense swarm of the horde had encamped and now were staring, apelike, at him.

Then his finger sought the trigger. And five crackling spurts of flame, five shots, spat out into the calm and misty air of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

morning. A few severed leaves swayed down, idly, with a swinging motion. A broken twig fell, hung suspended a moment, then detached itself again and dropped to earth.

"Good Lord! Look at that, will you?" cried Stern.

A startled cry broke at the same time from the girl's lips.

Both of them had expected some effect from the sudden fusillade, but nothing like that which actually resulted.

For, as the quick shots echoed to stillness again, and even before the first of the falling leaves had spiraled to the ground, an absolute, unbroken silence fell upon that vile rabble of beast-men—the silence of a numbing, paralyzing, sheer brute terror.

Some stood motionless, crouching on their bandy legs, holding to whatsoever tree or bush was nearest, staring with wild eyes.

Others of the loathsome creatures dropped to their knees.

But by far the greater part, thousands on thousands of the little monstrosities, fell prone and grovelling. Their hideous, masklike faces hidden, there they lay on the moss and all among the undergrowth, the trampled, desecrated, befouled undergrowth of Madison Forest.

Then all at once, over and beyond them, Stern saw the blue-curling smudge of the remains of the great fire by the spring.

He knew that, for a few brief, all-precious moments, the way might possibly be clear to come and go—to get water—to save Beatrice and himself from the thirst-tortures—to procure the one necessary thing for the making of his destructive Pulverite.

His heart gave a great, up-bounding leap.

"Look, Beatrice!" he cried, his voice ringing out over the terror-stricken things. "Look, we're gods! While this lasts—*gods!*

"Come, now's our only change! *Come on!*"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE OBEAH

TOGETHER, as in a dream—a nightmare, dazed, incredible, grotesque—they advanced out into the dim-shaded forest aisles.

"Don't look!" Stern exclaimed, shuddering at sight of the unspeakable hideousness of the things, at glimpses of gnawed bones, grisly bits of flesh, dried gouts of blood upon the woodland carpet. "Don't think—just come along!"

"Five minutes, and we're safe, there and back again. S-h-h-h! Don't hurry. Count, now—count your steps—one, two, three—four, five six—so—steady, steady!"

Now they were ten yards from the tower, now twenty. Bravely they walked, now straight ahead among the trees, now circling some individual, some horrid group. Stern held the water-pail firmly. He gripped the revolver in a grasp of iron. The magazine-rifle lay in both the girl's hands, ready for instant use.

Suddenly Stern fired again, three shots.

"Some of 'em are moving, over there!" he said in a crisp, ugly tone. "I guess a little lead close to their ears will fix 'em for a while."

His voice went to a hoarse whisper.

"Gods!" he repeated. "Don't forget it, for a moment; don't lose that thought, for it may pull us through. These creatures here, *if* they're descended from the blacks, must have some story, some tradition of the white man. Of his mastery, his power. We'll use it now, by Heaven, as it never yet was used."

Then he began to count again; and so, tense, watching, with eager-burning eyes and taut muscles, the man and woman made their way of frightful peril.

A snuffing howl rose.

"You will, will you!" Stern cried, adding another kick to the one he had just dealt to one of the creatures, who had ventured to look up at their approach. "Lie down, ape!" And with the clangorous metal pail he smote the ugly, brutish skull.

Beatrice gasped with fear; but the bluff

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made good. The creature grovelled, and again the pair strode forward, masterfully. Masterfully they had to go, or not at all. Masterfully, or die. For now their all-in-all lay just in the grim, steel-hard sense of mastery.

Before the girl's eyes a sort of haze seemed forming. Her heart beat thick and heavy. Stern's counting sounded very far away and strange; she hardly recognized his voice. To her came wild, disjointed, confused impressions—now a bony and distorted back; now a simian head; again a group that crouched and cowered hideously in its filthy squalor.

Then all at once, there right before her she saw the little, woodland path that, slightly descending, led past a big oak she well knew, down to the margin of the pool.

"Steady, girl, steady!" came the engineer's warning, tense as piano-wire. "Almost there, now. What's *that?*"

For a brief instant he hesitated. The girl felt his arm grow even more taut, she heard his breath catch. Then she, too, looked, and saw.

It was enough, that sight, to have smitten with sick horror the bravest man who ever lived. For there, beside the smouldering embers of the great feast-fire, littered with bones and indescribable refuse, a creature was squatting on its hams. It was one of the horde, indeed, yet vastly different, tremendously more venomous, more dangerous of aspect.

Stern knew at once that here, not prostrate nor yet crouching, was the chief of the blue horde.

He knew it by the superior size and strength of the thing, by the almost manlike cunning of the low, gorilla face, the gleam of intelligence in the reddened eye, the crude wreath of maple leaves upon the head, the necklace of finger-bones strung around the neck.

But most of all, he knew it by a thing that shocked him more than the sight of stark, outright cannibalism would have done. A simple thing, yet how ominous! A thing that argued reason in this reversion from the human; a thing that sent the shuddering chills along the engineer's spine.

For the chief, the obeah-man of this vile drove, rising now from beside the fire with a gibbering chatter and a look of bestial malice, held between his fangs a twisted brown leaf.

Stern knew at a glance the leaf was the rudely curved product of some degenerated tobacco-plant. He saw a glow of red at the tip of the close-rolled tobacco. Vapor issued from the chief's slit-mouth.

"Good Lord—he's—*smoking!*" stammered the engineer. "And that means—means an almost human brain. And—quick, Beatrice, the water! I didn't expect this. Thought they were all alike. Back to the tower, quick! Here, fill the pail. I'll keep him covered."

He brought up the automatic, till the bead lay straight upon the naked, muscular breast of the obeah.

Beatrice handed Stern the rifle, then snatching the pail, dipped it, filled it to the brim. Stern heard the water lap and gurgle. He knew it was but a few seconds, yet it seemed an hour to him, at the very least.

Keener than ever before in his whole life, his mental pictures now limned themselves with lightning rapidity upon his brain.

Stamped on his consciousness was this lithe, lean, formidable body, showing beyond dispute its human ancestry; the right hand that held a *steel-pointed* spear; the horrible ornament (a withered little smoked hand) that dangled from the left wrist by a cord of platted fiber.

Vividly Stern beheld a deep gash or scar that ran from the chief's right eye—a dull, fishlike eye, evidently destroyed by that wound—down across the leathery cheek, across the prognathous jaw. A reddish-purple wale, which on that clay-blue skin produced an effect indescribably repulsive.

Then the chief grunted, and moved forward, toward them. Stern saw that the gait was almost human, not shuffling and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uncertain like that of the others, but firm and vigorous. He estimated the height at more than five feet, eight inches; the weight at possibly one hundred and forty pounds. Even at that juncture, his scientific mind, always accustomed to judging, instinctively registered these data, with the others.

"Here, you, get back there!" shouted Stern, as the girl rose again from filling the pail.

The cry was instinctive, for even as he uttered it, he knew it could not be understood. Eight hundred years of rapid degeneration had long wiped all traces of English speech from the brute-men, who now, at most, chattered some bestial gibberish. Yet the warning echoed loudly through Madison Forest; and for a moment the obeah hesitated.

The tone, perhaps, conveyed some meaning to that brain behind the sloping forehead. Perhaps some dim, racial memory of human speech still lingered in that mind, in that strange organism which, by some freak of atavism, had "thrown back" out of the mire of returning animality almost to the human form and stature once again.

However that may have been, the creature-chief halted in his advance. Undecided he stood, a moment, leaning upon his spear, sucking at the rude mockery of a cigar. Stern remembered having seen a trained chimpanzee smoke in precisely the same manner, and a nameless loathing filled him at this mockery of the dead, buried past.

"Let me carry the pail!" he said. "We've got to hurry—hurry—or it may be too late!"

"No, no—I'll keep the water!" she answered, panting. "You need both hands clear! Come!"

They turned, and, with a shuddering glance behind, started back for the tower again.

But the obeah, with a whining plaint, spat away his tobacco-leaf. They heard a shuffling of feet. And, looking round again, both saw that he had crossed the little brook.

There he stood now, his right hand out, palm upward, his lips curled in the ghastly imitation of a smile, blue gums and yellow tushes showing, a sight to freeze the blood with horror. Yet through it all, the meaning was most clearly evident.

Beatrice, laden as she was with the heavy water-bucket, more precious now to them than all the wealth of the dead world, would have retreated, but with a word of sharp command Stern told her to wait. He stopped short in his tracks.

"Not a step!" he commanded. "Hold on! *If* he makes friends with us—with gods—that's a million times better, every way."

He faced the obeah. His left hand gripped the repeating rifle, his right the automatic, held in readiness for instant action. The muzzle sight never for a second left its aim at the chief's heart.

And for a second silence fell there in the forest. Save for the rustling murmur of the horde, and a faint, woodland trickle of the stream, you might have thought the place untouched by life.

Yet death lurked there, and destiny. The destiny of the whole world, the future, the human race, forever and ever without end. And the cords of Fate were being loosed for a new knitting.

And Stern, with Beatrice there at his side, stood harsh and strong and very grim; stood like an incarnation of man's life, waiting.

And slowly, step by step, over the yielding, noiseless moss, the grinning, one-eyed, ghastly, hideous obeah-man came nearer, nearer still.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIGHT IN THE FOREST

NOW the thing was close, very close to them, while a hush lay upon the watching horde and on the forest. So close, that Stern could hear the soughing breath between those hideous lips and see the twitching of the wrinkled lid over the black, glittering eye that blinked as you have often seen a chimpanzee's.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All at once the obeah stopped. Stopped and leered, his head craned forward, that ghastly rictus on his mouth.

Stern's hot anger welled up again. Thus to be detained, inspected and seemingly made mock of by a creature no more than three-quarters human, stung the engineer to rage.

"What do you want?" he cried, in a thick and unsteady voice. "Anything I can do for you? If not, I'll be going."

The creature shook its head. Yet something of Stern's meaning may have won to its smoldering intelligence. For now it raised a hand. It pointed to the pail of water, then to its own mouth; again it indicated the pail, then stretched a long, repulsive finger at the mouth of Stern.

The meaning seemed clear. Stern, even as he stood there in anger—and in wonder, too, at the fearlessness of this super-thing—grasped the significance of the action.

"Why, he must mean," he said, to Beatrice, "he must be trying to ask whether we intend to drink any of the water. Maybe it's poisoned, now, or something. Maybe he's trying to warn us."

"Warn us? Why should he?"

"How can I tell? It isn't entirely impossible that he still retains some knowledge of his human ancestors. Perhaps that tradition may have been handed down, some way, and still exists in the form of a crude, beast-religion."

"Yes, but then—"

"Perhaps he wants to get in touch with us, again; learn from us; try to struggle up out of the mire of degeneration, who knows? If so—and it's possible—of course he'd try to warn us of a poisoned spring."

Acting on this hypothesis, of which he was now half-convinced, Stern nodded. By gesture-play he answered: Yes. Yes, this woman and he intended to drink of the water. The obeah-man, grinning, showed signs of lively interest. His eyes brightened, and a look of craft, of wizened cunning crept over his uncanny features.

Then he raised his head and gave a long, shrill, throaty call, ululating and unspeakably weird.

Something stirred in the forest. Stern heard a rustle and a creeping murmur; and quick fear chilled his heart.

It seemed to him as though a voice were calling, perhaps the inner, secret voice of his own subjective self—a voice that cried:

"You, who must drink water—now *he* knows you are not gods, but mortal creatures. Tricked by his question and your answer, your peril now is on you! *Run!*"

The voice died. Stern found himself, with a strange, taut eagerness tingling all through him, facing the obeah and—*not daring turn his back!*

Retreat they must, he knew. Retreat, at once! Already in the forest he understood that heads were being lifted, beast-like ears were listening, brute eyes peering, and ape-hands clutching the little, flint-pointed spears. Already the girl and he should have been half-way back to the tower; yet still, inhibited by that slow,

Many Never Suspect Cause of Backaches

This Old Treatment Often Brings Happy Relief

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills. (ADV.)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grinning, staring advance of the chief, there the engineer stood.

But all at once the spell was broken.

For with a cry, a hoarse and frightful yell of passion, the obeah leaped—leaped like a huge and frightfully agile ape—leaped the whole distance intervening.

Stern saw the thing's red-gleaming eyes fixed on Beatrice. In those eyes he clearly saw the hell-flame of lust. And as the woman screamed in terror, Stern pulled trigger with a savage curse.

The shot went wild. For at the instant, though he felt no pain, his arm dropped down and sideways.

Astounded, he looked. Something was wrong! What? His finger refused to serve. It had lost all power, all control.

For goodness' sake, what could it be?

Then—all this taking but a second—Stern saw; he knew the truth. Staring, pale and horrified, he understood.

There, through the fleshy part of his forearm, thrust clean from side to side by a lightning-swift stroke, he saw the obeah's spear!

It dangled strangely, in the firm muscles. The steel barb and full eighteen inches of the shaft were red and dripping.

Yet still the engineer felt no slightest twinge of pain.

From his numbed, paralyzed hand the automatic dropped, fell noiselessly into the moss.

And with a formless roar of killing-rage. Stern swung on the obeah, with the rifle.

Stern felt his heart about to burst with rage. He did not even think of the second revolver in the holster at his side. With only his left hand now to use, the weapon could only have given clumsy service.

Instead, the man reverted instantly to the jungle stage himself—to the law of claw and fang, of clutching talon, of stone and club.

The beloved woman's cry, ringing in his ears, drove him mad. Up he whirled the rifle again, up, up, by the muzzle: and down upon that villainous skull he dashed it with a force that would have brained an ox.

The obeah, screeching, reeled back. But he was not dead. Not dead; only stunned a moment. And Stern, horrified, found himself holding only a gun-barrel. The stock, shattered, had whirled away and vanished among the tall and waving ferns.

Beatrice snatched up the fallen revolver. She stumbled; and the pail was empty. Spurting, splashing away, the precious water flew. No time, now, for any more!

For all about them, behind them and on every hand, the things were closing in.

They had seen blood—had heard the obeah's cry; they knew! Not gods, now, but mortal creatures! *Not gods!*

"Run! *Run!*" gasped Beatrice.

The spear still hanging from his arm, Stern wheeled and followed. High and hard he swung the rifle-barrel, like a war-club.

No counting of steps, now; no play at divinity. Panting, horror-stricken, frenzied with rage, bleeding they ran. It was a hunt—the hunt of the last two humans, by the nightmare horde.

In front, a bluish and confused mass seemed to dance and quiver through the forest; and a pattering rain of spears and little arrows began to fall about the fugitives.

Then the girl's revolver sputtered in a quick volley; and again, for a space, silence fell. Again the way was clear. But in the path, silent and still, or writhing horribly, lay a few of the things. And the pine-needles and soft moss were very red, in spots.

Stern had his pistol out, too, by now. For behind and on his flanks, like ferrets hanging to a hunted creature, the swarm was closing in.

The engineer, his face very white and drawn, veins standing out on his sweat-beaded forehead, heard Beatrice cry out to him, but he could not understand her words.

Yet as they ran, he saw her level the pistol and snap the hammer twice, thrice, with no result. The little dead *click* sounded like a death-warrant to him.

"Empty?" cried he. "Here, take this

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one! You can shoot better now than I can!" And into her hand he thrust the second revolver.

Something stung him on the left shoulder. He glanced round. A dart was hanging there.

With an oath, the engineer wheeled about. His eyes burned and his lips drew back, taut, from his fine white teeth.

There, already recovered from the blow which would have killed a man ten times over, he saw the obeah snarling after him. Right down along the path the monster was howling, beating his breast with both huge fists. And, now feeling fear no more than pain, Stern crouched to meet his onslaught.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GOAL, AND THROUGH IT

IT ALL happened in a moment of time—a moment, long—in seeming—as an hour. The girl's revolver crackled, there behind him. Stern saw a little round bluish hole take shape in the obeah's ear, and red drops start.

Then with a ghastly screaming, the thing was upon him.

The engineer struck out with the rifle-barrel. All the force of his splendid muscles lay behind that blow. The thing tried to dodge. But Stern had been too quick.

Even as it sprang, with talons clutching for the man's throat, the steel barrel drove home on the jaw.

An unearthly, piercing yell split the forest air. Then Stern saw the obeah, his jaw hanging oddly awry, all loose and shattered, fall headlong in the path.

But before he could strike again, could batter in the base of the tough skull, a moan from Beatrice sent him to her aid. He sank beside her on his knees.

On her forehead, as she lay gasping among the bushes, he saw an ugly welt.

"A stone? They've hit her with a stone? *Killed her, perhaps?*"

Kneeling there, he snatched up the revolver, and in a deadly fire he poured out the last eight spitting shots, point-blank in the faces of the ugly crowding rabble.

Up he leaped. The rifle-barrel flashed and glittered as he whirled it. Like a reaper, laying a clean swath behind him, the engineer mowed down a dozen of the beast-men.

Shrieks, grunts, snarls mingled with his execrations.

Then with a strength he never dreamed was his, Stern caught up the fainting girl in his left arm, as easily as though she had been a child.

Still dragging the spear which pierced his right—his right that yet protected her a little—he flung the blood-stained gun barrel straight at the jabbering ape-faces—before he turned and ran.

Stones, darts, spears, clattered in about him. He heard the swish and tang of them; heard the leaves flutter as the missiles whirled through.

Struck? Was he struck again?

He knew not, nor cared. Only he thought of shielding Beatrice. Nothing but that, just that!

"The gate—oh, let me reach the gate! God! The gate—"

And all of a sudden, though how he could not tell, he seemed to see the gate before him. Could it be? Or was that, too, a dream? A cruel, vicious mockery of his disordered mind?

Yes, the gate! It must be! He recognized the giant pine, in a moment of lucidity. Then everything began to dance again, to quiver in the mocking sunlight.

"The gate!" he gasped once more, and staggered on. Behind him, a little trail of blood-drops from his wounded arm fell on the trampled leaves.

Something struck his bent head. A blinding pain darted through it. Thousands of beautiful and tiny lights of every color began to quiver, to leap and whirl.

"They've set the building on fire!" he thought; yet all the while he knew it was impossible; he understood it was only an illusion.

He heard the rustle of the wind through the forest. It blended and mingled with a horrid tumult of grunts, of clicking, cries,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of gnashing teeth and bestial mutterings.

"The gate!" Stern sobbed, between hard-set teeth, and stumbled forward, ever forward, through the horde. To him, protectingly, he clasped the beautiful body in the tiger-skin.

Living? Was she living yet? A great, aching wonder filled him. Could he reach the stair with her, and bear her up it? Hurl back these devils? Save her, after all?

The pain had grown exquisite, in his head. Something seemed hammering there, with regular strokes—a red-hot sledge upon an anvil of white-hot steel.

It looked to him as though a hundred, a thousand of the little blue fiends were leaping, shrieking, circling there in front of him. Ten thousand! And he must break through!

Break through!

Where had he heard those words? Ah! Yes!

Instantly there recurred to him a distant echo of a song, a Harvard football-song. He remembered. Now he was back again.

Came the crash and boom of the old Harvard Band, with Big Joe Foley banging the drum till it was fit to burst; with Marsh blowing his lungs out on the cornet, and all the other fellows raising Cain.

Uproar! Cheering! And again the music! Everybody was singing now, everybody roaring out that brave old fighting-chorus.

And see! Look there! The goal!

Right and left he dashed them, with a giant's strength. They scattered in panic, with strange and unintelligible cries.

"The goal!"

He reached it. And, as he crossed the line, he fell.

"*Down,* down!" he sobbed.

CHAPTER XXVI

BEATRICE DARES

AN HOUR later, Stern and Beatrice sat weak and shaken in their stronghold on the fifth floor again, to pull together for resistance to the siege that had set in.

With the return of reason to the engineer—his free bleeding had somewhat checked the onset of fever—and of consciousness to the girl, they began to piece out, bit by bit, the stages of their retreat.

Now that Stern had barricaded the stairs, two stories below, and that for a little while they felt reasonably safe, they were able to take their bearings, to recall the flight, to plan a bit for the future. A future dark with menace, seemingly hopeless in its outlook.

"If it hadn't been for you," Beatrice was saying, "if you hadn't picked me up and carried me, when that stone struck—"

"How's the ache now?" Stern hastily interrupted, in a rather weak yet brisk voice, which he was trying hard to render matter-of-fact. "Of course the lack of water, except that half-pint or so, to bathe your bruise with, is a rank barbarity. But if we haven't got any, we haven't. That's all. All, till we have another go at 'em!"

"Oh, Allan!" she exclaimed, tremulously. "Don't think of me. Your back's gashed with a spear-cut, your head's battered, arm pierced, and we've neither water nor bandages. Nothing of any kind to treat your wounds with."

"Come now, don't you bother about me," he objected, trying hard to smile, though racked with pain. "I'll be O.K., fit as a fiddle, in no time. Perfect health and all that sort of thing, you know. I'll heal right away.

"Head's clear again already, in spite of that whack with the war-club, or whatever it was they landed with. But for a while I certainly was seeing things. I had 'em—had 'em bad! Thought—well, strange things.

"My back? Only a scratch, that's all. It's begun to coagulate already, the blood has, hasn't it?" And he strove to peer over his own shoulder at the slash. But the pain made him desist. He could hardly keep back a groan. His face twitched involuntarily.

The girl sank on her knees beside him. Her arm encircled him; her hand smoothed his forehead; and with a strange look she studied his unnaturally pale face.

"It's your arm I'm thinking about, more than anything," she said. "We've got to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have something to treat that with. Tell me, does it hurt you very much, Allan?"

He tried to laugh, as he glanced down at the wounded arm, which, ligatured about the spear-thrust with a thong, and supported by a rawhide sling, looked strangely blue and swollen.

"Hurt me? Nonsense. I'll be fine and dandy in no time. The only trouble is, I'm not much good as a fighter this way. Southpaw, you see. Can't shoot worth a—a cent, you know, with my left. Otherwise, I wouldn't mind."

"Shoot? Trust *me* for that now!" she exclaimed. "We've still got two revolvers and the shotgun left, and lots of ammunition. I'll do the shooting, if there's got to be any done."

"You're all right, Beatrice!" the wounded man exclaimed fervently. "What would I do without you? And to think how near you came to— But never mind. That's over now; forget it."

"Yes, but what next?"

"Don't know. Get well, maybe. Things might be worse. I might have a broken arm, or something; laid up for weeks—slow starvation and all that. What's a mere puncture? Nothing! Now that the spear's out, it'll begin healing right away.

"Bet a million, though, that What's-His-Name down there, Big Chiefo the Monk, won't get out of his scrape in a hurry. His face is certainly scrambled, or I miss my guess. You got him through the ear with one shot, by the way. Know that? Fact! Drilled it clean! Just a little to the right and you'd have had him for keeps. But never mind; we'll save him for the encore, if there is any."

"You think they'll try again?"

"Can't say. They've lost a lot of fighters, killed and wounded, already. And they've had a pretty liberal taste of our style. That ought to hold them for a while. We'll see, at any rate. And if luck stays good, we'll maybe have a thing or two to show them if they keep on hanging around where they aren't wanted."

Came now a little silence. The girl sat beside Stern, half supporting his wounded body with her firm, white arm. Thirst was beginning to torment them both, particularly Stern, whose injuries had already given him a marked temperature. But water there was absolutely none. And so, still planless, glad only to recuperate a little, content that for the present the horde had been held back, they waited.

Waiting, they both laughed. The girl's thoughts were all of him. But he, man-fashion, was trying to piece out what had happened, to frame some coherent idea of it all, to analyze the urgent necessities that lay upon them both.

Here and there, a disjointed bit recurred to him, even from out the delirium that had followed the blow on the head. From the time he had recovered his senses in the building, things were clearer.

He knew that the horde, temporarily frightened by his mad rush, had given him time to stumble up again and once more lift the girl, before they had ventured to creep into the arcade in search of their prey.

He remembered that the spear had been gone then. Raving, he must have broken and plucked it out. The blood, he recalled, was spurting freely as he had carried Beatrice through the wreckage and up to the first landing, where she had regained partial consciousness.

Then he shuddered at recollection of that stealthy, apelike creeping of the horde scouts in among the ruins, furtive and silent; their sniffing after the blood-track; their frightful agility in clambering with feet and hands alike, swinging themselves up like chimpanzees, swarming aloft on the death-hunt.

He had evaded them, from story to story. Beatrice, able now to walk, had helped him roll down balustrades and building-stones, fling rocks, wrench stairs loose and block the way.

And so, wounding their pursuers, yet tracked always by more and ever more, they had come to the landing where, by aid of the rifle-barrel as a lever, they had been able to bring a whole wall crashing down, to choke the passage.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That had brought silence. For a time, at least, pursuit had been abandoned. In the sliding, dusty avalanche of the wall, hurled down the stairway, Stern knew by the grunts and shrieks which had arisen that some of the horde had surely perished—how many, he could not tell. A score or two at the very least, he ardently hoped.

Fear, at any rate, had been temporarily injected into the rest. For the attack had not yet been renewed. Outside in the forest, no sign of the horde, no sound. A disconcerting, ominous calm had settled like a pall. Even the birds, recovered from their terrors, had begun to hop about and take up their twittering little household tasks.

As in a kind of clairvoyance, the engineer seemed to know there would be respite until night. For a little while, at least, there could be rest and peace. But when darkness should have settled down—

"If they'd only show themselves!" he thought, his leaden eyes closing in an overmastering lassitude, a vast swooning weakness of blood-loss and exhaustion. Not even his parched thirst, a veritable torture now, could keep his thoughts from wandering. "If they'd tackle again, I could score with —with lead—what's *that* I'm thinking? I'm not delirious, am I?"

For a moment he brought himself back with a start, back to a full realization of the place. But again the drowsiness gained on him.

"We've got guns now: guns and ammunition," he thought. "We—could pick them off—from the windows. Pick them—off—pick—them—off—"

He slept. Thus, often, wounded soldiers sleep, with troubled dreams, on the verge of renewed battle which may mean their death, their long and wakeless slumber.

He slept. And the girl, laying his gashed head gently back upon the pile of furs, bent over him with infinite compassion. For a long minute, hardly breathing, she watched him there. Her breath came more quickly. A strange new light shone in her eyes.

"Only for me, those wounds!" she whispered wonderingly. "Only for me!"

Taking his head in both her hands, she kissed him as he lay unconscious. Kissed him twice, and then a third time.

Then she arose.

Quickly, as though with some definite plan, she chose from among their store of utensils a large copper kettle, one which he had brought her the week before from the little Broadway shop.

She took a long rawhide rope, braided by Stern during their long evenings together. This she knotted firmly to the bale of the kettle.

The revolvers, fully reloaded, she examined with care. One of them she laid beside the sleeper. The other she slid into her full, warm bosom, where the clinging tiger-skin held it ready for her hand.

Then she walked noiselessly to the door leading into the hallway.

Here for a moment she stood, looking back at the wounded man. Tears dimmed her eyes, yet they were very glad.

"For your sake, now, everything!" she said. "Everything—all! Oh, Allan, if you only knew! And now—good-by!"

Then she was gone.

And in the silent room, their home which they had made out of wreck and chaos, the fevered man lay very still, his pulses throbbing in his throat.

Outside, very far, very faint in the forest, a muffled drum began to beat again.

And the slow shadows, lengthening across the floor, told that evening was drawing nigh.

CHAPTER XXVII

TO WORK!

THE engineer awoke with a start—awoke to find daylight gone, to find that dusk had settled, had shrouded the whole place in gloom.

Confused, he started up. He was about to call out, when prudence muted his voice. For the moment he could not recall just what had happened or where he was; but a vast impending consciousness of evil and of danger weighed upon him. It warned

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him to keep still, to make no outcry. A burning thirst quickened his memory.

Then his comprehension returned. Still weak and shaken, yet greatly benefited by his sleep, he took a few steps toward the door. Where was the girl? Was he alone? What could all this mean?

"Beatrice! Oh, Beatrice!" he called thickly, in guarded tones. "Where are you? Answer me!"

"Here—coming!" he heard her voice. And then he saw her, dimly, in the doorway.

"What is it? Where have you been? How long have I been asleep?"

She did not answer his questions, but came quickly to him, took his hand, and with her own smoothed his brow.

"Better, now?" she asked.

"Lots! I'll be all right in a little while. It's nothing. But what have you been doing all this time?"

"Come, and I'll show you." She led him toward the other room.

He followed, in growing wonder.

"No attack, yet?"

"None. But the drums have been beating for a long time, now. Hear *that?"*

They listened. To them drifted a dull, monotonous sound, harbinger of war.

Stern laughed bitterly, chokingly, by reason of his thirst.

"Much good their orchestra will do them," he said, "when it comes to facing soft-nosed .38's! But tell me, what was it you were going to show me?"

Quickly she went over to their crude table, took up a dish and came back to him.

"Drink this!" she ordered.

He took it, wondering.

"What? *Coffee?* But—"

"Drink! I've had mine, already. Drink!"

Half-stupefied, he obeyed. He drained the whole dish at a draft, then caught his breath in a long sigh.

"But this means water!" he cried, with renewed vigor. "And—"

"Look here," she directed, pointing.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There on the circular stove stood the copper kettle, three-quarters full.

"Water! You've got *water?*" He started forward in amazement. "While I've been sleeping? Where—"

She laughed with real enjoyment.

"It's nothing," she disclaimed. "After what you've done for me, this is the merest trifle, Allan. You know that big cavity made by the boiler-explosion? Yes? Well, when we looked down into it, before we ventured out to the spring, I noticed a good deal of water at the bottom, stagnant water, that had run out of the boiler and settled on the hard clay floor and in among the cracked cement. I just merely brought up some, and strained and boiled it, that's all. So you see—"

"But, my Lord!" the man burst out, "d'you mean to say you—you went down *there—alone?*"

Once more the girl laughed.

"Not alone," she answered. "One of the automatics was kind enough to bear me company. Of course the main stairway was impassable. But I found another way, off through the east end of the building and down some stairs we haven't used at all, yet. They may be useful, by the way, in case of—well, a retreat. Once I'd reached the arcade, the rest was easy. I had that leather rope tied to the bucket handle, you see. So all I had to do was—"

"But the horde! The horde?"

"None of them down there, now—that is, alive. None when I was there. All at the war-council, I imagine. I just happened to strike it right, you see. It wasn't anything. We simply had to have water, so I went and got some, that's all."

"That's all?" Stern echoed, in a trembling voice. "That's—*all!*"

Then, lest she see his face even by the dim light through the window, he turned aside a minute. For the tears in his eyes, he felt, were a weakness which he would not care to reveal.

But presently he faced the girl again.

"Beatrice," he said, "words fall so flat, so hopelessly dead; they're so inadequate, so anticlimactic at such a time, that I'm just going to skip them all. It's no use thanking you, or analyzing this thing, or saying any of the commonplace, stupid things. Let it pass. You've got water, that's enough. You've made good, where I failed. Well—"

His voice broke again, and he grew silent. But she, peering at him with wonder, laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come," said she, "you must eat something, too. I've got a little supper ready. After that, the pulverite?"

He started as though shot.

"That's so! I can make it, now!" he cried, new life and energy suffusing him. "Even with my one hand, if you help me, I can make it. Supper? No, no! *To work!*"

But she insisted, womanlike; and he at last consented to a bite. When this was over, hastily, they began preparations for the manufacture of the terrible explosive, Stern's own secret and invention, which, had not the cataclysm intervened, would have made him ten times over a millionaire. More precious now to him, that knowledge, than all the golden treasures of the dead, forsaken world!

"We've got to risk a light," he said. "If it's turned low, and shaded, maybe they won't learn our whereabouts. But however that may be, we can't work in the dark. It would be too horribly perilous. One false move, one wrong combination, even the addition of one ingredient at the improper moment, and—well, you understand."

She nodded.

"Yes," she said. "And we don't want to quit just yet!"

So they lighted the smaller of their copper lamps, and set to work in earnest.

On the table, cleared of dishes and of food, Stern placed in order eight glass bottles, containing the eight basic chemicals for his reaction.

Beside him, at his left hand, he set a large metal dish with three quarts of water, still warm. In front of him stood his copper tea-kettle—the strangest retort, surely, in which the terrific compound ever had been distilled.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Now our chairs, and the lamp," he said, "and we're ready to begin. But first," and, looking earnestly at her, "first, tell me frankly, wouldn't you just a little rather have me carry out this experiment alone? You could wait elsewhere, you know. With these uncertain materials and all the crude conditions we've got to work under, there's no telling what might happen.

"I've never yet found a man who would willingly stand by and see me build pulverite, much less a woman. It's frightful, this stuff is! Don't be ashamed to tell me; are you afraid?"

For a long moment the girl looked at him.

"Afraid—with *you?*" she said.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PULVERITE

AN HOUR passed. And now, under the circle of light cast by the hooded lamp upon the table, there in that bare, wrecked office-home of theirs, the pulverite was coming to its birth.

Already at the bottom of the metal dish lay a thin yellow cloud, something that looked like London fog on a December morning. There, covered with the water, it gently swirled and curdled, with strange metallic glints and oily sheens, as Beatrice stirred it with a gold spoon at the engineer's command.

From moment to moment he dropped in a minute quantity of glycerin, out of a glass test-tube, graduated to the hundredth of an ounce. Keenly, under the lamp-shine, he watched the final reaction; his face, very pale and set, reflected a little of the mental stress that bound him.

Along the table-edge before him, limp in its sling, his wounded arm lay useless. Yet with his left hand he controlled the sleeping giant in the dish. And as he dropped the glycerin, he counted.

"Ten, eleven, twelve—fifteen, sixteen—twenty! Now! Now pour the water off, quick! *Quick!*"

Splendidly the girl obeyed. The water ran, foaming strangely, out into a glass jar set to receive it. Her hands trembled not, nor did she hesitate. Only, a line formed between her brows; and her breath, half-held, came quickly through her lips.

"Stop!"

His voice rang like a shot.

"Now, decant it through this funnel, into the vials!"

Again, using both hands for steadiness, she did his bidding.

And one by one as she filled the little flasks of chained death, the engineer stoppered them with his left hand.

When the last was done, Stern drew a tremendous sigh, and dashed the sweat from his forehead with a gesture of victory.

Into the residue in the dish he poured a little nitric acid.

"That's got no kick left in it, now, anyhow," he said, relieved. "The HNO_3 tames it, quick enough. Don't tip one over, as you love life!"

He stood up, slowly, and for a moment remained there, his face in the shadow of the lamp-shade, holding to the table-edge for support, with his left hand.

The girl looked at him.

"And now," she began, "now—"

The question had no time for completion. For even as she spoke, a swift little something flicked through the window, behind them.

It struck the opposite wall with a sharp *crack!* then fell slithering to the floor.

Outside, against the building, they heard another and another little shock; and all at once a second missile darted through the air.

This hit the lamp. Stern grabbed the shade and steadied it. Beatrice stooped and snatched the thing from where it lay beside the table.

Stern gave only one glance at it, as she held it up. He saw a long reed stem, wrapped at its base with cotton fibers—a fish-bone point, firm-lashed—and on that point a dull red stain, a blotch of something dry and shiny.

"Blow-gun darts!" he cried. "Poisoned! They've seen the light, got our range! They're up there in the tree-tops, shooting at us!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With one puff, the light was gone. He seized Beatrice by the wrist. He dragged her toward the front wall, off to one side, out of range.

"The flasks of pulverite! Suppose a dart should hit one?" the girl exclaimed.

"That's so! Wait here. I'll get them."

But she was there beside him as, in the thick dark, he cautiously felt for the deadly things and found them with a hand that *dared not* tremble. And though here, there, the little venom-stings whis-s-shed over them and past them, to shatter on the rear wall, she helped him bear the vials, all nine of them, to a place of safety in the left-hand front corner where by no possibility could they be struck.

Together then, quietly as wraiths, they stole into the next room; and there, from a window not as yet attacked, they spied out at the dark tree-tops that lay in dense masses almost brushing the walls.

"See? See there?" Stern whispered in the girl's ear. He pointed where, not ten yards away and below, a blacker shadow seemed to move along a hemlock branch. Forgotten now, his wounds. Forgotten his loss of blood, his fever and his weakness. The sight of that creeping, stealthy attack nerved him with new vigor. And, even as the girl looked, Stern drew his revolver.

Speaking no further word, he laid the ugly barrel firm across the sill.

Carefully he sighted, as best he could in that gloom lit only by the stars. Coolly as though at a target-shot, he brought the muzzle-sight to bear on that deep, crawling shadow.

Then suddenly a spurt of fire split the night. The crackling report echoed away. And with a bubbling scream, the shadow loosened from the limb, as a ripe fruit loosens. Vaguely they saw it fall, whirl, strike a branch, slide off, and disappear.

All at once a pattering rain of darts flickered around them. Stern felt one strike his fur jacket and bounce off. Another grazed the girl's head. But they stood to their work, and did not flinch.

Now her revolver was speaking, in antiphony with his, and from the branches, two, three, five, eight, ten of the ape-things fell.

"Give it to 'em!" shouted the engineer, as though he had a regiment behind him. "*Give* it to 'em!" And again he pulled trigger.

The revolver was empty.

With a cry he threw it down, and running to where the shotgun stood, snatched it up. He scooped into his pocket a handful of shells from the box where they were stored; and as he darted back to the window, he cocked both hammers.

"Poom! *Poom!*"

The deep baying of the gun roared out in twin jets of flame.

Stern broke the gun and jacked in two more shells.

Again he fired.

"Good heavens! How many of 'em *are* there in the trees?" he shouted.

"Try the pulverite!" cried Beatrice. "Maybe you might hit a branch!"

Stern flung down the gun. He ran to the corner where the vials were standing.

He caught one up—he dared not take two lest they should by some accident strike together.

"Here—here, now, take this!" he bellowed.

And from the window, aiming at a pine that stood seventy-five feet away—a pine whose branches seemed to hang thick with the horde's blowgun-men—he slung it with all the strength of his uninjured arm.

Into the gloom it vanished, the little meteorite of latent death, of potential horror and destruction.

"If it hits 'em, they'll think we *are* gods, after all!" cried the engineer, peering eagerly. But for a moment, nothing happened.

"Missed it!" he groaned. "If I only had my right arm to use now, I might—"

Far below, down there a hundred feet beneath them, and out a long way from the tower base, night yawned wide in a burst of hellish glare.

A vast conical hole of flame was gouged in the dark. For a fraction of a second every tree, limb, twig stood out in vivid

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detail, as that blue-white glory shot aloft.

All up through the forest the girl and Stern got a momentary glimpse of little, clinging things, crouching misshapen, hideous.

Then, as a riven and distorted whirl burst upward in a huge geyser of annihilation, came a detonation that ripped, stunned, shattered; that sent both the defenders staggering backward from the window.

Darkness closed, again, like a gaping mouth that shuts. And all about the building, through the trees, and down again in a titanic, slashing rain fell the wreckage of things that had been stone, and earth, and root, and tree, and living creatures—that had been—that now were but one indistinguishable mass of ruin and of death.

After that, here and there, small dark objects came dropping, thudding, crashing down. You might have thought some cosmic gardener had shaken his orchard, his orchard where the plums and pears were rotten-ripe.

"One!" the engineer cried, in a strange, wild, exultant voice.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BATTLE ON THE STAIRS

ALMOST like the echo of his shout, a faint snarling cry rose from the corridor, outside. They heard a clicking, sliding, ominous sound; and, with instant comprehension, knew the truth.

"They've got up, some of them—somehow!" Stern cried. "They'll be at our throats, here, in a moment! Load! *Load!* You shoot—I'll give 'em pulverite!"

No time, now, for caution. While the girl hastily threw in more cartridges, Stern gathered up all the remaining vials of the explosive.

These, garnered along his wounded arm which clasped them to his body, made a little bristling row of death. His left hand remained free, to fling the little glass bombs.

"Come! Come, meet 'em—they mustn't trap us, here!"

And together they crept noiselessly into the other room and thence to the corridor-door.

They peered out.

"Look! Torches!" he whispered.

There at the far end of the hallway, a red glare already flickered on the wall around the turn by the elevator-shaft. Already the confused sounds of the attackers were drawing near.

"They've managed to dig away the barricade, somehow," said Stern. "And now they're out for business. Clubs, poisoned darts and all. And fangs, and claws! How many of 'em? God knows! A swarm, that's all!"

His mouth felt hot and dry, with fever, and the mad excitement of the impending battle. His skin seemed tense and drawn, especially upon the forehead. As he stood there, waiting, he heard the girl's quick breathing. Though he could hardly see her in the gloom, he felt her presence and he loved it.

"Beatrice," said he, and for a moment his hand sought hers, "Beatrice, little girl o' mine, if this is the big finish, if we both go down together and there's no tomorrow, I want to tell you now—"

A yapping outcry interrupted him. The girl seized his arm. Brighter the torchlight grew.

"Allan!" she whispered. "Come back, back, away from here. We've got to get up those stairs, there, at the other end of the hall. This is no kind of place to meet them. We're exposed, here. There's no protection!"

"You're right," he answered. "Come!"

Like ghosts they slid away, noiselessly, through the enshrouding gloom.

Even as they gained the shelter of the winding stairway, the scouts of the horde, flaring their torches into each room they passed, came into view around the corner at the distant end.

Shuffling, hideous beyond all words by the fire-gleam, bent, wizened, blue, the things swarmed toward them in a vague and shifting mass, a ruck of horror.

The defenders, peering from behind the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broken balustrade, could hear the guttural jabber of their beast-talk, the clicking play of their fangs; could see the craning necks, the talons that held spears, bludgeons, blow-guns, even jagged rocks.

Over all, the smoky gleams wavered in a ghastly interplay of light and darkness. Uncanny shadows leaped along the walls. From every corner and recess and black, empty door, ghoulish shapes seemed creeping.

Tense, now, the moment hung.

Suddenly the engineer bent forward, staring.

"The chief!" he whispered. And as he spoke, Beatrice aimed.

There, shambling among the drove of things, they saw him clearly for a moment. He looked uglier, more incredibly brutal than ever now, by that uncanny light.

Stern saw—and rejoiced in the sight—that the obeah's jaw hung as though broken, all awry. The quick-blinking, narrow-lidded eyes shuttled here, there, as the creature sought to spy out his enemies. The nostrils dilated, to catch the spoor of man. Man, no longer god, but mortal.

One hand held a crackling pine-knot. The other gripped the haft of a stone ax, one blow of which would dash to pulp the stoutest skull.

This much Stern noted, as in a flash; when at his side the girl's revolver spat.

The report roared heavily in that constricted space. For a moment the obeah stopped short. A look of brute pain, of wonder, then of quintupled rage passed over his face. A twitching grin of passion distorted the huge, wounded gash of the mouth. He screamed: Up came the stone ax.

"Again!" Stern shouted. "Give it to him."

She fired on the instant. But already, with a chattering howl, the obeah was running forward. And after him, screaming, snarling, foaming till their lips were all a-slaver, the pack swept toward them.

Stern dragged the girl away, back to the landing.

"Up! *Up!*" he yelled.

Then, turning, he hurled the second bomb.

A blinding glare dazzled him. A shock, as of a suddenly unleashed volcano, all but flung him headlong.

Dazed, choked by the gush of fumes that burst in a billowing cloud out along the hall and up the stairs, he staggered forward. Tightly to his body he clutched the remaining vials. Where was Beatrice? He knew not. Everything boomed and echoed in his stunned ears. Below there, he heard thunderous crashes as wrecked walls and floors went reeling down. And ever, all about him, eddied the strangling smoke.

Then, how long after he knew not, he found himself gasping for air beside a window.

"Beatrice!" he shouted with his first breath. Everything seemed strangely still. No sound of pursuit, no howling now. Dead calm. Not even the drum-beat in the forest, far below.

"*Beatrice!* Where—are you? *Beatrice!*"

His heart leaped gladly as he heard her answer.

"Oh! Are you safe? Thank God! I—I was afraid—I didn't know—"

She ran to him along the dark passageway.

"No more!" she panted. "No more pulverite here in the building!" pleaded she. "Or the whole tower will fall and bury us! No more!"

Stern laughed. Beatrice was unharmed; he had found her.

"I'll sow it broadcast outside," he answered, in a kind of exultation, almost a madness from the strain and horror of that night, the weakness of his fever and his loss of blood. "Maybe the others, down there still, may need it. Here goes!"

And, one by one, all seven of the bombs he hurled far out and away, to right, to left, straight ahead, slinging them in vast parabolas from the height.

And as they struck one by one, night blazed like noonday; and even to the Palisades the crashing echoes roared.

The forest, swept as by a giant broom, became a jack-straw tangle of destruction.

Thus it perished.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the last vial of wrath had been outpoured, when silence had once more dropped its soothing mantle and the great brooding dark had come again, "girdled with gracious watchings of the stars," Stern spoke.

"Gods!" he exclaimed exultantly. "Gods we are now to them—to such of them as may still live. Gods we are; gods we shall be forever!

"Whatever happens now, *they* know us. The great white gods of terror! They'll flee before our very look! Unarmed, if we meet a thousand, we'll be safe. *Gods!*"

Another silence.

Then suddenly he knew that Beatrice was weeping.

And forgetful of all but that, forgetful of his weakness and his wounds, he comforted her—as only a man can comfort the woman he loves, the woman who, in turn, loves him.

CHAPTER XXX

CONSUMMATION

AFTER a while, both grown calmer, they looked again from the high window.

"See!" the engineer exclaimed, and pointed.

There, far away to westward, a few straggling lights—only a very few—slowly and uncertainly were making their way across the broad black breast of the river.

Even as the man and woman watched, one vanished. Then another winked out, and did not reappear. No more than fifteen seemed to reach the Jersey shore, there to creep vaguely, slowly away and vanish in the dense primeval woods.

"Come," Stern said at last. "We must be going, too. The night's half spent. By morning we must be very far away."

"What? We've got to leave the city?"

"Yes. There's no such thing as staying here now. The tower's quite untenable. Racked and shaken as it is, it's liable to fall at any time. But, even if it should stand, we can't live here any more."

"But where now?"

"I don't just know. Somewhere else, that's certain. Everything in this whole vicinity is ruined. The spring's gone. Nothing remains of the forest, nothing but horror and death. Pestilence is bound to sweep this place in the wake of such a—such an affair.

"The sights all about here aren't such as you should see. Neither should I. We mustn't even think of them. Some way or other we can find a path down out of here, away—away—"

"But," she cried anxiously, "all our treasures? All the tools and dishes, all the food and clothing, and everything? All our precious, hard-won things?"

"Nothing left of them now. Down on the fifth floor, at that end of the building, I'm positive there's nothing but a vast hole blown out of the side of the tower. So there's nothing left to salvage. Nothing at all."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Can you replace the things?"

"Why not? Wherever we settle down we can get along for a few days on what game I can snare or shoot with the few remaining cartridges. And after that—"

"Yes?"

"After that, once we get established a little, I can come into the city and go to raiding again. What we've lost is a mere trifle compared to what's left in New York. Why, the latent resources of this vast ruin haven't been even touched yet! We've got our lives. That's the only vital factor. With those everything else is possible. It all looks dark and hard to you now, Beatrice. But in a few days, wait and see!"

"Allan!"

"What, Beatrice?"

"I trust you in everything. I'm in your hands. Lead me."

"Come, then, for the way is long before us."

Two hours later, undaunted by the far howling of a wolf-pack, as the wan crescent of the moon came up the untroubled sky, they reached the brink of the river, almost due west of where the southern end of Central Park had been.

This course, they felt, would avoid any possible encounter with stragglers of the horde. Through Madison forest—or what remained of it—they had not gone; but had struck eastward from the building, then northward, and so in a wide detour had avoided all the horrors that they knew lay near the wreck of the tower.

The river, flowing onward to the sea as calmly as though pain and death and ruin and all the dark tragedy of the past night, the past centuries had never been, filled their tired souls and bodies with a grateful peace. Slowly, gently it lapped the wooded shore, where docks and slips had all gone back to nature; the moonlit ripples spoke of beauty, life, hope, love.

Though they could not drink the brackish waters, yet they laved their faces, arms, and hands, and felt refreshed. Then for some time in silence they skirted the flood, ever northward, away from the dead city's heart. And the moon rose even higher, higher still, and great thoughts welled within their hearts. The cool night breeze, freshening in from the vast salt wastes of the sea—unsailed forever now—cooled their cheeks and soothed the fever of their thoughts.

Where the grim ruin of Grant's Tomb looked down upon the river, they came at length upon a strange, rude boat, another, then a third—a whole flotilla, moored with plaited ropes of grass to trees along the shore.

"These must certainly be the canoes of the attacking force from northward, the force that fought the horde the night before *we* took a hand in the matter; fought, and were beaten, and—devoured," said Stern.

And with a practical eye, wise and cool, even, despite the pain of his wounded arm, he examined three or four of the boats as best he could by moonlight.

The girl and he agreed on one to use.

"Yes, this looks like the most suitable," judged the engineer, indicating a rough, bankalike craft nearly sixteen feet long, which had been carved and scraped and burned out of a single log.

He helped Beatrice in, then cast off the rope. In the bottom lay six paddles of the most degraded state of workmanship. They showed no trace of decoration whatsoever, and the lowest savages of the pre-cataclysmic era had invariably attempted some crude form of art on nearly every implement.

The girl took one of the paddles.

"Which way? Up-stream?" she asked. "No, no, you mustn't even try to use that arm."

"Why paddle at all?" Stern answered. "See here."

He pointed where a short and crooked mast lay, unstepped, along the side. Lashed to it was a sail of rawhides, clumsily caught together with thongs, heavy and stiff, yet full of promise.

Stern laughed.

"Back to the coracle stage again," he said. "Back to Caesar's time, and way beyond!" And he lifted one end of the mast.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Here we've got the Seuvian *pellis pro velis,* the 'skins for sails' all over again—only more so. Well, no matter. Up she goes!"

Together they stepped the mast and spread the sail. The engineer took his place in the stern, a paddle in his left hand. He dipped it, and the ripples glinted away.

"Now," he said, in a voice that left no room for argument, "now, you curl up in the tiger-skin and go to sleep! This is my job."

The sail caught the breath of the breeze. The banka moved slowly forward, trailing its wake like widening lines of silver in the moonlight.

And Beatrice, strong in her trust of him, her confidence and love, lay down to sleep while the wounded man steered on and on, and watched her and protected her. And over all the stars, a glory in the summer sky, kept silent vigil.

Dawn broke, all aflame of gold and crimson, as they landed in a sheltered little bay on the west shore.

Here, though the forest stood unbroken in thick ranges all along the background, it had not yet invaded the slope that led back from the pebbly beach. And through the tangle of what once must have been a splendid orchard, they caught a glimpse of white walls overgrown with a mad profusion of wild roses, wistarias, and columbines.

"This was once upon a time the summer-place, the big concrete bungalow and all, of Harrison Van Amburg. You know the billionaire, the wheat man? It used to be all his in the long ago. He built it for all time of a material that time can never change. It was his. Well, it's ours now. Our home!"

Together they stood upon the shelving beach, lapped by the river. Somewhere in the woods behind them a robin was carolling with liquid harmony.

Stern drew the rude boat up. Then, breathing deep, he faced the morning.

"You and I, Beatrice," he said, and took her hand. "Just you—and I!"

"And love!" she whispered.

"And hope, and life! And the earth reborn. The arts and sciences, language and letters, truth, 'all the glories of the world' handed down through us!

"Listen! The race of men, our race, must live again—shall live! Again the forests and the plains shall be the conquest of our blood. Once more shall cities gleam and tower, ships sail the sea, and the world go on to greater wisdom, better things!

"A kinder and a saner world this time. No misery, no war, no poverty, woe, strife, creeds, oppression, tears—for we are wiser than those other folk, and there shall be no error."

He paused, his face irradiate. There recurred to him the prophecy of a great orator of that other time. And very slowly he spoke again:

"Beatrice, it shall be a world where thrones have crumbled and where kings are dust. The aristocracy of idleness shall

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reign no more! A world without a slave. Man shall at last be free!

" 'A world at peace, adorned by every form of art, with music's myriad voices thrilled, while lips are rich with words of love and truth. A world in which no exile sighs, no prisoner mourns; a world on which the gibbet's shadow shall not fall.

" 'A race without disease of flesh or brain, shapely and fair, the wedded harmony of form and function. And as I look, life lengthens, joy deepens, and over all in the great dome shines the eternal star of human hope!' "

"And love?" she smiled again, a deep and sacred meaning in her words. Within her stirred the universal motherhood, the hope of everything to be, the call of the unborn, the insistent voice of the race that was here in embryo.

"And love!" he answered, his voice now very tender, very grave.

Tired, yet strong, he looked upon her. And as he looked his eyes grew deep and eager.

Sweet as the honey of Hymettus was the perfume of the orchard, all a powder of white and rosy blooms, among which the bees, pollen-dusted, labored at their joyous, fructifying task. Fresh, the morning breeze. Clear, warm, radiant, the sun of June; the summer sun uprising far beyond the shining hills.

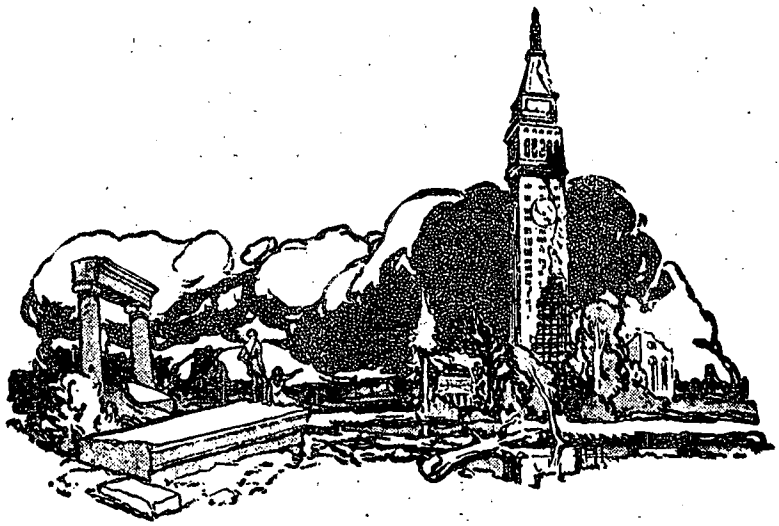
Life, everywhere—and love!

Love, too, for them. For this man, this woman, love; the mystery, the pleasure, and the eternal pain.

With his unhurt arm he circled her. He bent, he drew her to him, as she raised her face to his. And for the first time his mouth sought hers.

Their lips, long hungry for this madness, met there and blended in a kiss of passion and of joy

"Darkness and Dawn" is the first of a trilogy. The other stories are "Beyond the Great Oblivion" and "The Afterglow."



Original Illustration of "Darkness and Dawn" from THE CAVALIER magazine, January 1912

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Allan England

Author of "The Flying Legion," "The House of Transmutation," etc.

From "The Men Who Make The Argosy," October 15, 1932

I AM a Nebraskan by birth, having reached this Vale of Tears in 1877. My father was an army officer, so I was brought up, as a child, in army posts. The family later moved to Boston, where I went through Harvard—worked my way through—emerging with some degrees and things, also incipient T.B. and a nervous breakdown.

I went up into the Maine woods, to get rid of the T.B., and started hacking out stories on a busted typewriter and the backs of old letters. Sold the first story to a magazine—vastly to my surprise—and have been selling them now for nearly 30 years, hundreds and hundreds of them; novels, novelettes, shorts, travel articles, essays, poems, movies, everything except plays.

Bob Davis, of universal fame, got hold of me as a beginner and licked me into shape. He invited me to meet him at a Maine lake, and took me out in a boat and suggested that I sign up with him for five years, gently rocking the boat meanwhile. As I couldn't swim very well, and the lake was extremely cold, I signed up. That must have been about 1905, and I have been writing for the Munsey Company ever since; many millions of words, I reckon.

There is nothing much to tell about myself, except that I have traveled pretty much all over the lot and have done a little of many things—run a kindergarten, taken care of furnaces and lawns, manicured horses and extracted lacteal fluid from bovines, worked on farms, sawed wood in lumber camps, been high chief assistant potato and carrot peeler on a sealing-steamer for six weeks in the Arctic ice, been cook for twenty-five codfishers on a Banks schooner, worked on the famous old "Appeal to Reason" out in Kansas in the palmy days of 1913, explored Maya ruins in Yucatan, been wiped out in a Cuban cyclone, and been nearly wrecked, drowned, frozen, starved and scared to death on many occasions. (Mostly scared.)

Nearly forgot one interesting feature of my life—my many treasure-hunting experiences. I have helped organize a number of such expeditions, by land and sea; have been interested in ventures in Oak Island, N. S.; Choctohatchee Bay and Santa Rosa Island, Fla., Key West, Perdido Bay, Ala., Grand Cayman, Yucatan, etc. We have hunted and explored and dug and dived for pieces of eight, gold bars, gold coin, church-plate, and other things. One expedition even tried to salvage $1,000,000 of whisky in casks, thought to be about sixty years old. Anything like even an outline of this treasure-hunting activity of mine would fill many pages.

AT FIFTY-FIVE I am still going strong, like to live, eat, walk, golf, swim and saw wood, also to write adventure stories embodying some of the really wonderful phases of life by land and sea that have come my way. Life is a great game. It has had me down, a number of times, but never out.

I spend my summers up here at my camp in the woods, at the mountain lake called Massasecum, which is Indian for "Heap - big - lot - of - water - with - damned - few - and - small - fish - securely - hidden-in-it." Winters, I drive to my Key West hideout.

EDITOR'S NOTE—Our records indicate that George Allan England died on June 26, 1936. He was one of the first great science-fiction writers, and continued throughout his life writing stories which are considered to be among the best in the field.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rebel Soul

By AUSTIN HALL

An Amazing Novelet

He was completely unfettered by man-made laws

PROLOGUE

IT WAS my friendship for Wilkins that led to it all.

Were it not for his acquaintance and the fact that we took such keen enjoyment in our long discussions and our thrashing over things of doubt, I would not today be a philosophical man from Missouri.

Wilkins you may know as a professor. Physiology, psychology, or something of the sort, was the chair he held. I don't know at this late date just what it was, but it was an ology at any rate. There was such a broadness to his learning and he seemed to know so much that the thing he taught really didn't matter. I know he could have tackled anything and done himself great credit.

As for myself I was also quite a thinker. Although no specialist and without that finesse and distinctness, which enables one to dispose of learning for a price, I had nevertheless a store of knowledge quite imposing. From my youth I had a great leaning for the ologies and had studied with avidity their each and several teachings, cramming here and learning, picking up and storing away. Had I reduced it all to a system, my wisdom would have been profound; but picked up as it was, in a smattered way, I had a mince-pie knowledge.

This is why it was that at times I seemed so interesting. I sometimes found a jewel of thought in the shuffle of my learning that excited admiration; I was no specialist or professor, just a common man; but I had a radiance of thinking and suddenness of thought that goes for conversation. Which was undoubtedly the very thing that got me the friendship of Wilkins.

We were in the habit, through several years, of dining at Waldron's, which, you may understand, was as much a club as it was an eating house. A kind of place, in fact, that I would like to see much multiplied, where one can feed not alone the body, but mind as well.

We never had a dinner that did not have its talk, and every talk was a discussion. From the little things to politics we ranged, from politics to metaphysics, and then on back to man. The embracement of our conversation took in everything. And we took therefrom great enjoyment.

The professor, as I say, was a great psychologist. The reasons that he gave for the workings of the mind and its miracles of action were truly wonderful. To him the workings of man were perfect, a machine of mind and body, a thing entire and finished. He held a view quite common, that man is all complete in himself, that the brain controls the body, that thought is but cerebral movement induced by nervous action.

This indeed was his greatest hobby, the culmination of his thought. From the very bottom of his nature he stood for things material, for the all-sufficiency of man.

And after all it might be said that I was almost as certain. There was no standing against his logic. What with my dimmer mind and slower thinking I had no arguments to meet him, nor proofs for refutation. I was fast becoming all convinced, absorbing all his teachings. I had not ground to stand on. But a few more talks and 'twould all be over. And therein comes the story.

Copyright 1917 by The Frank A. Munsey Company

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The greatness of his spirit overshadows—the colossal fame of his far-flung glory bears down all the world"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AS I remember now, it was a night in autumn; the rain was pouring down and the streets were running water. A few stray patrons were seated here and there, the waiters flitted in and out, and the sound of dishes clicking. The professor was talking.

Tonight he was quite eloquent, and between chewing the butt of my cigar and meditative puffing, I wondered and admired at the clearness of his reason.

Even our neighbor at a nearby table, turned slightly in attention. I noted in an absent way that he seemed an old, old man. The incisiveness of the professor's reasoning was so remarkable that I did not wonder at his interest, and noticed it only in a passing sort of way as of one who sees afar.

It was not until the man had risen and had come over to us that I studied him at all. He was a man quite aged, stooped, with grayish hair and nervous shaking hands. He might have been, perhaps, about sixty years of age, maybe a little more. His walk was a little bit unsteady, and he had a look that spoke of dissipation.

"Pardon me," he said, "for my intrusion; but what you have said has moved me deeply. I am a little hard of hearing, and if you don't mind I would like to sit where I can hear you."

The professor was quite pleased. The conversation had been all for me; but just the same he was glad to have another convert.

He seemed to be a willing one and to follow the professor eagerly. His brow was furrowed and his eyes intent as he drank in the professor's maxims. There was something about him of a student, of a man who does deep thinking, who having been through many things likes to weigh them up with wisdom. The tribute of his attention was most whole-hearted. For my part I spent the time in silence, in smoke, and in watching my new companion.

Wilkins leaned back in his chair. The old man took a drink of water, I was puffing my cigar.

"Well," I said, "what do you think about it?"

He held his glass half-way.

"Very interesting," he replied. "Your theories are very ingenious, and were they true quite wonderful. You seem to have great proofs and undoubtedly great sincerity. Time was when I believed it all myself. Unfortunately, broad as you are, you have not gone far enough. The material on which you stand is all too earthly; the limits of your arguments confine you to a narrow sphere and you lack perspective."

"You mean?" asked the professor.

"That you are too material. You are weighing a two-ton object and using a druggist's scales. You consider man as of earth and water and have allowed for nothing else. This is well enough for part; but you don't go far enough."

"You mean?"

"Just this. That thought is not cerebral movement, induced by nervous action, and that the conception of thought as taught by you and many other psychologists is a thing all wrong. You have made of man a mere machine, a thing of dust and hopelessness. You have taken a holy thing, a thing of all eternity, and turned it into mud and clay, a thing to be destroyed. The sweetest and the best part of all of us you have left out—the essence of the spirit."

He put the empty glass upon the table.

"Sometimes I have found that it is best after all to go back to our early teachings; our forefathers were not all fools, nor all the prophets crazy. I have found much that they have said and taught to be of goodly wisdom."

The professor was smiling graciously.

"All of this is very well," he said, "but it gets us nowhere. Conjecture is a foolish thing, even when most certain. What the world wants now is facts."

"Listen."

The old man held up a bony finger. "I have a tale to tell."

Somehow as he looked at me and then at Wilkins I knew that he would tell it.

"I have a tale to tell," he repeated, "and, like the Ancient Mariner, I must get it off my spirit. Every so often I must

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relate my story and always to a doubter. But first of all before I start, I shall ask you a few short questions. "How old am I?"

"Why," I said, laughing and not knowing what it led to, "sixty."

"And you?"

"Sixty-five."

He laughed; and settled in his chair. "I am thirty-five."

For a moment I thought he must be joking; it was a thing impossible; I had never seen nor heard of a man who had aged so early.

"Yes," he said when he had let us wonder. "I am thirty-five. I am the youngest of the three. Do I look as one who has dissipated, had sickness or been in sorrow?"

There was no doubt about our answer; we answered "Yes," the both.

"Well," he said, "you are wrong. I have always been a temperate man, of regular ways, and steady judgments. I never have been sick except in childhood, and I have had no sorrow. My father and mother both are living; I have a pretty wife and children."

Wilkins interrupted.

"What was it then?"

"Listen."

And here is the tale he told:

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF GEORGE WITHERSPOON

I CAN remember the time quite plainly. It was a cool, clear morning of the early spring. The birds were singing their first glad lays and the air was full of their profuse song. It was the morning of the sunshine, and the first light of my childhood's understanding. I was but five years old, a little tot and just sitting up from a long sickness.

Perhaps it was this that made me remember or it may be what followed that impressed me so. There were many days as fair as this but this single one of the whole lot is my mark of lifetime.

I was sitting on my mother's knee; and I remember the warm, sweet arms around me and her fingers loving in my hair. Her tenderness and love was the joy of thankfulness, the passionate exuberance of a mother who has recovered her only own. My father was sitting by us and we were talking.

I remember my own keen interest and delight and my childish wonder; for we were talking of a little boy. He was a bright blue-eyed and happy child of my own age. I had always been quite lonely, and the thought of a real live playmate filled me with joy and heart-dancing eagerness. My mother was speaking.

"I think, John, the plan is very good," she was saying. "Walter is so lonesome. He really must have some one to play with. Fully half his sickness, I am convinced, has come from that. Playing widens a child's understanding and opens up its spirit. If you are satisfied with the boy's parents and are sure there is no taint, you had better bring him."

My father got up from his chair.

"You needn't worry, Mary, as to that. I knew George Witherspoon quite well. He was the brightest man of all his fellows. And as for goodness he was past all classing; he had an inert nobleness that could not be measured. He was the deftest man I ever knew, in mind as well as body. His only fault was a heart too large and a recklessness with money.

"With his health as well as fortune he was prodigal—to hear him tell it he would live for ever. It was all too bad that it could not be so. When he died he left a sweet and loving wife, and a child for her to care for. She was a tender, loving thing, frail, with the noble soul that goes with true motherhood. The sacrifices that she made broke her down, and the support that she would have been for her only child was snapped away. Before she died, out of friendship for poor George and admiration for her spirit, I promised her to care for her son."

"Well," said my mother, "you had better bring him. I am sure you know what's best. I think it's better."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you could have known my father at that time you would understand what kind of a man he was. Perhaps I can make you see him. He was a banker, and a man of hard practical ideas. Men of his profession usually are; their very environment makes them so. I have always noticed that idealism goes with dreams and materialism runs to gold.

He was a center figure in our little city, respected, looked up to, and envied. Some people called him cold; but his coldness was only self-respect, and the dignity which he thought should go with his profession. He was shrewd and practical and saw the world according to his training, through the golden eyes of values.

A man of few mistakes, of cold and studied actions; in his home life strict and sedate and inclined to be a little pompous; in fact he was what you would be inclined to call—if he had lived in France —bourgeois.

My mother was another person altogether. Together the two of them went from the extreme of dreaming idealism to that of stern materiality. The fine distinction of race was on her side of the family. She had the fine drawn quality which loves the light of lighter things, the spirit of the esthetic, which recognizes and distinguishes the finer chords and beauty, which after all are the only things that make life worth the living.

She had all the qualifications to be the mother of an artist, a poet, or a great musician. Dreaming, idealism, love and beauty were the things to be attained. In her I think my father saw himself, what he should have been, and loved her for it. Certain it is, my mother worshiped him as a model of a man. And though she threw a mantle over him and saw him through the eyes of a poet, no one knew it but herself.

With such parents it was natural that I should have a beautiful home and luxurious surroundings. But I pined away in silent splendor, and longed for the squalid pleasure of the children of the streets, where was companionship and playing. And I became so bad that my parents saw it. I was at last to have a playmate. How happy I was at the very thought! Happy yes, but when I think of it after all these years, I think, and I have thought quite often, that it would have been better if I had pined away.

I shall never forget that morning. What a beautiful, wonderful one it was! The air all sunshine, and the beautiful child coming up the steps, his hair all golden, his blue eyes dancing and his hand in my father's, leading. My mother knelt and kissed him and exclaimed at his wondrous beauty. He laughed in a knowing way, and even in childhood had a way of winning.

My father patted him on the head.

"His father over and over again," he said. "George Witherspoon is here and growing up. His name is George. He is named after his father. We will keep him and raise him as our own. If we can make as good a man out of him as his parent we shall be repaid."

My mother stood up to my father and her hand was on his arm.

"John," she said, "I had no idea a child could be so beautiful; there is a lightness in his eyes. What a playmate he will be for our little one."

And oh, the rest of that day! I never shall forget it. My toys were all alive. I had never known before their value. They were things to be moved about and toyed with; but now and all at once, they breathed with life. Houses went up, horses ran; the soldiers marched, and everything was animation. Into my veins he blew the life of freedom and of play. At nighttime my face was glowing and I was tired.

When my mother tucked us in our little bed she sat down close beside us. We were a strange, strange pair, we little ones; I a puny petted thing, weak and slow of thinking; and he all rosy, dimpled, and full of a glowing vivacity and action. As I closed my eyes I heard my mother speak in undertone.

"Would, oh would, that they both were so," she was saying.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER II

THE FORTUNETELLER

THE years went by a-flying, and we both grew up. George went on as he started, cheery, laughing, romping, filled with a flood of boyish recklessness and I plodding along behind. I was never any match for my fair-haired companion. I was methodical and sedate; from the earliest years I had the reserve and aloofness of my father, and what I took up I went at slowly.

But I had a record for completion; all my little enterprises were accomplished, and successful in their finality. From the very first I had a taste for study and a longing for the unknown things, the things of mystery and unknown to man. I wanted to know the why. I played to be sure; but my life was inclined to the shadows.

George was the very opposite. He fairly reeled through boyhood; stealing apples, dancing, making noise. Everything he undertook went to success. His laugh, his beauty, his happiness were his passports. His way of getting into things was marvelous. From the very first he had magnetic action, certain, swift and sure; the world was his very own.

He would laugh and talk and have his way; sing and dance and have his way again. Where I plodded along for understanding, he got it with a smile. Lessons that took me hours of study, he grasped in a few short moments. He was easily first in all his classes and I a good, hard-working third.

He caroled his way through everything. I never knew but a single person who ever shunned him.

Looking back now after all these years, I cannot help but wonder. That single person of all the world is the one who understood him. How she came to see through that face of sunshine, and to read that which even he himself could not have known is a thing I could not understand.

It was marble time, a time to linger in the streets, to peg at every corner and play at the ring; but we were going home, straight home. School was out and we were all excitement. A band of gypsies had hit town, the first in several years. To our boyish imaginations it was a great invasion. We told each other tales as we went along.

On our own street the shawl-clad, many-colored women were going from house to house.

"Fortunetellers!" panted George and broke into a run. "Let's make Aunt Mary have them tell our fortunes."

A moment later we both slammed through the gate.

Had it been my father he would have laughed; but my mother was a dreamer. It was just in the nature of her being to be interested in such a flitting piece of fancy. Besides she was a woman and loved to steal the future.

First the gypsy told her fortune. I do not remember what it was, only there was a journey, a dark-haired man, money, a fortune, a long life-line; and my mother laughed.

And then came my turn. I was all impatience. The woman took my hand. For a long time she studied it and said not a single word. Then she looked up and shook her head.

"I no understand," she said.

"What," said my mother laughing; "can't you read his palm?"

The gypsy led me to the light.

"See," she said and pointed, her long lean finger tracing, "the life-line. See. He live, he die. He live and die again. Two times he live. Two times he die. I do not understand."

"Huh," said George who was at my elbow, "that's all right. He's like a cat. What's the rest?"

She bent over my hand again.

"I see work and study, lots of work, big success; then misfortune, disappointment, terrible misfortune, death and then a big success, great man die again. No man will understand."

"That ain't no fortune at all," said George, "tell mine. I want to know what my wife will look like, the color of her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hair, what kind of teeth she's going to have and the size of her feet. Also tell me how much money I am going to have, where I am going to have the most fun, and when I can take a trip to the moon. Go ahead."

He thrust out his hand. I was terribly disappointed at my fortune and wondered what his would be.

George winked at me. "Come on, old girl," he said to the gypsy; "give me a good one."

She laughed and took his hand and then exclaimed, tracing the lines about, and mumbling a gibberish which I could not understand, but which I took to be her native tongue. Finally she stopped, and raised her head.

"Let me see boy, how you look."

She placed one hand on the top of his head and held it back. With their faces almost touching she looked down into his eyes.

Then she drew away. A look of fear was in her face.

"I no like this boy!" she exclaimed. "He devil man."

"Why!" my mother exclaimed blankly. "Why, George!"

"Gee," he laughed, "it ain't my fault, that's the first I knew of it."

But the gypsy backed away.

"He your son?" she asked.

"Why no, not exactly. I—we raised him."

"So, I see. Better you send him away. No good for you. No good for your son. No can live with a devil man."

My mother got her purse. "How much do I owe you?"

"Two fortune. No three. Devil fortune. No."

"Well," mother laughed, "all right."

That night we told my father.

"Well," he said, "what do you expect, spending money on such nonsense? I never can understand how people can be such easy bilks."

But I've often wondered since. And I think I'm just as sound in reason as my father. Were we such bilks after all?

WE GREW up and passed into the period of youthtime. The incident of the gypsy was soon forgotten. It was so trivial, and so ridiculous that we passed it by without a thought. Only occasionally George would swell up with a little pride, declare himself above all mortals, and with comic seriousness, and ridiculous gestures go through a series of gesticulating antics culminating in a startling "Boo!"

We went to college. It was here that our lives began to settle, mine into studiousness, and steadiness with ambition and a definite aim in view—a place in life. And George's into a life of wild hilarity and frolic. With the approach of manhood his exuberance of spirit got past all control. He traveled out nights and lived in wild carousal. The companions that he chose I was ashamed of; and the women, I blushed when I wondered what my mother would have thought. Of course I remomstrated; but he laughed at me.

"Now, now," he would say, "Mr. Walter Serious. Don't get flustered. My companions will not bite you. Just you keep at your studies, and let me alone. I'm in for the life. It's my nature. I'm not a recluse; I'm a thing of sunshine. I must have it. Wine, women and song. Can't you see, you sober old dear, that it is the breath of my existence?"

"But," I expostulated, "these companions? Can't you see they are beneath you? You are ruining yourself and bringing disgrace upon the family."

He laughed loudly.

"Oh dear, oh dear, disgrace! As old as the world itself. As soon as a man begins to enjoy himself he starts disgracing. They give us muscles, spirit, exuberance and youth, and ask to lock us up. What is wine for but to drink, what is woman for but love, and song but for the singing?"

He stretched his strong arms out full length.

"Oh," he said, "Walter, can't you see it? I want it all; the whole, whole world. Love, wine, and laughter. One grand and glorious splash!"

He laughed again and somehow his laugh

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made me feel lonesome. I was so quiet and serious, and my life so cold and steady that somehow I longed for his wild, hot nature.

And so he went his way, joyous, rollicking, singing. His college career was one long frolic. The only thing that kept him up was his brilliancy. This was truly wonderful. Of all the marvelous quick flashing minds, his was the greatest I have ever seen. He was as perfect in his oratory as in his football, he won his way in his classes with the same ease as he did in his love affairs. Rollicking, singing, leading in everything, he went his way.

It was in my junior year that I fell in love. It was a sorority dance. Strange to say the young lady was from our own home city. And though I was strict and slow and steady, it was love at the first full sight.

She was a daughter of Judge Rohilla. I had not seen her in several years, and now when I saw her in the first beauty of budding womanhood, I was in love all over. I remember how I danced that night, the quickness of my feet and the lightness of my being. With this fair-haired maiden by my side, blue-eyed and supple-formed, I became another being, and a lightness hitherto unknown crept into my heart.

George passed us dancing, his blue eyes flashing and his form all grace and movement. The partner in his dance was proud and well she should be. As he glided by he winked and winked again; he knew I'd fallen, and then he laughed.

"Well, old sober socks," he said a little later, "how does it feel? I've really got an idea, Walter, that you're in love." He took me by my shoulders and looked laughingly in my face. "Sure, Walter, tell me. Isn't it so?"

I blushed and tried to get away.

That night we had a long, long talk. He on women and I on woman. I was another person. Though I did not know it I had passed one phase of life and entered on another. Henceforth I was to plod along not for myself, but for another. That night I dreamed a future of wealth, and power, and place, and a fair-haired woman by my side. They say that dreams are different. How different it was all to be.

CHAPTER III

THE WARNING

IT WAS in our senior year that I noticed the first sign of a change in George. He went out now most every night and returned in the early morning. Quite often he was intoxicated—two sheets in the wind he called it—but it's all the same—plain drunk. He began to shun his old-time friends and spend his time in the city. Where he went, or what he did, he never told, though I had a suspicion that it was some loose drinking place, or haunt of women.

He never seemed to study; and he never failed to know. The head of the class was his as usual and mine the same old third. I could not understand. I studied for what I got and worked till the early morning; he scarcely opened a book. He had a quickness to his mind that seemed uncanny. Once I asked him and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't you see it?" he laughed. "I'm the devil. Sure," he said, "it's no joke. Remember what the gypsy said?" And he laughed again.

Of course I knew he was only joking.

One day we got to talking about my love affairs. He was lying on a lounge, his feet cocked up and he was smoking cigarettes. The air was full of smoke and he was laughing at my coughing. Somehow, lately he had taken a keen delight in teasing.

He twitted me everlastingly about my sweetheart and I in turn told him all about her. To me it was a serious affair and nothing to be laughed at. I told him all my plans and hopes and expectations, at which he listened absently, lying on his back and blowing smoke clouds up in the air.

"Do you really think, Walter, that you will win her?" he was saying.

"Why, of course," I answered, "she's promised. We've pledged ourselves." And I told him all about it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He laughed again and in a knowing way.

"Poor sober socks," he said, "you've got a lot to learn. You stumble through your love like a blind man in a cornfield. I feel sorry for you."

"What do you mean? Not that I—"

"Certainly."

"That I won't have her?"

"Certainly; just that. She will never be your wife. How do I know? Walter, have you noticed lately anything wrong in me? Well, there is. I've got a power of vision. I don't know why, but I seem inspired. What other men get by striving, I simply pluck; I have almost reached the fourth dimension; my brain is so clear, and active, so powerful and alive, that at times I seem all mind and spirit. It seems as though I am just being born, that I am coming toward a light. They say mind rules over matter, and I believe it's so. I've tried it, even on abstract things. By concentration and determination, I grasp and see, learn and possess. Study is a useless thing. Desire is all-sufficient.

"And yet, even with this power, there is something in me. I'm at heart a rebel. I cannot understand it; but it's so. My mind is striving, seething, and in revolt, too large for my body. I cannot hold it, and in consolation I go to ways of flesh, to excess, to dissipation. I am being forced on the maelstrom of eternity; something drives me on, something that I cannot understand.

"At times I think that I'm a spirit and am not human; but when I stop and think and see these arms and legs and hands and eyebrows I have to own that, after all, I am merely man.

"You ask me about your sweetheart. I laugh and scoff and tease you; the perversity of my spirit drives me on, I know it isn't right, but I cannot help it. I am driven to it.

"But at times I tell the truth. I have a power of vision and can see the past and the future. What I told you is no joking. Clara is not for you. In the eleventh hour you'll lose her.

"This may be our last fair talk. Something is going to happen. I know it just as sure as living. There is something calling, something reaching, and I can't resist. I want to be fair with you, Walter, and give you warning. When I am drawn into the maw, you must watch yourself. You are the person nearest to me, and therein lies your danger. When the time comes, be ready."

"You talk like a spiritualist."

"I'm not."

"What are you then?"

"I don't know. An atom of the universe, driven by an unknown force. That's all I know. When it acts I am swept along; there's no resisting. That's all I know."

Now I was a materialist from my very make-up. I didn't believe in these things at all. I was like my father, cold and reserved, and seeing things just as they are. George's talk was a thing I did not understand and had no faith in. And I told him so.

"Very well," he said. "Only don't ever say I didn't warn you."

I said I was a materialist. I was. But just the same, though I was stern and strict and believed only in hard and cold facts, what he had said, together with his strange, queer actions, began imperceptibly to work upon my feelings. I became obsessed with jealousy and distrust. I was so wrapped up in my love for Clara that the thought of anything standing in its road, or that I was not to attain that which I was after, roused in me feelings to which I had hitherto been a stranger. I began to watch, to think, and to worry; I could not sleep at nights. Though I reasoned with myself and laughed at my fancied fears, I could not shake them off.

But though I was going through this fretful state there was nothing in the whole wide world that should have made me worry. Clara was as happy and sincere in her love as she was pure and noble. We went on with our plannings, our castles, our hopes, and expectations with all the fervor and enthusiasm that goes with lovers.

In a few short weeks would come my

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graduation; our marriage, a honeymoon, and then a settled life of happiness and hope. Our folks were as happy as ourselves. It was the union of two families high and respectable.

GRADUATION came; and all the honor and excitement that goes thereto. George, as usual, held his place, the head, the first of all his class. I was the same hard-working third. And then the clapping, and applause and congratulations of our friends.

To me the day was doubly great. Clara was waiting for me, her eyes all admiration, life, and animation. In a few short days would come our marriage.

I shall not tell you of that evening, but 'twas the happiest that I ever spent. I floated back to our rooms with my heart 'most bursting. The world could not be fuller, nor life be more serene.

In our rooms I found George waiting. It was the last night of our college life and of all our time together. In a few short hours our ways would part. It was meet that we should have a good, long talk.

I was all cheerfulness and exuberance and so was he. To celebrate the occasion he had procured a bottle of good old wine. I very seldom drank it; but of late he had been accustomed to celebrate everything with liquor.

When I was seated and comfortable he poured us each a glass.

"We'll drink to our parting, Walter," he said. "I know you don't drink liquor, but this is an occasion that will never come again. Here's to our lives and the future."

He raised his glass, and out of sheer good spirits I raised mine to it. How was I to know the sequel? And really, to be honest with poor George, I don't think that he himself knew what was coming.

With the draft of wine his eyes sparkled. I have never seen liquor act so quickly, and especially on one so accustomed to its action. It seemed to go right through him and to paralyze. A strange light came into his eyes, a light I had never seen before. He staggered forward, his body swaying, and dropped into a chair.

"What is it, George?" I exclaimed. "What, what is it?"

He seemed hardly to see me. His eyes were glazed and distant like those of one who sees a thing afar. The only movement that he made was to raise his hands up to his head.

"Water," he said. "Water, please. Oh, my head, my head!"

I brought him a glass of water and held it to his lips. He took it and mumbled, and his words were indistinct. I knew he wasn't drunk; there was something about his actions which was not of one who's sick. The look that filled those eyes disturbed me; a flutter not to be described, of a soul dissolving.

It was only with an effort that he seemed to see me. By a concentration of the will he seemed to draw himself together. It was the last time that I ever saw him, George Witherspoon, the playmate of my youth.

"Walter," he said, and he drew me close down to him. "It has come at last—the Rebel Soul. I was warned; I scoffed and did not believe it. I love you, Walter. Whatever may come after, remember that I have always loved you.

"I don't know what is to happen, but I hear it calling. I leave George Witherspoon to-night. Remember what I told you once before; be careful of yourself. Whatever you do, Walter, watch yourself to-night."

He took my hand in both of his, and then, though we were men full grown, he kissed me. He quite overwhelmed me.

"Oh, George," I said, "calm yourself. It is only the wine. Listen—"

I lifted my eyes to his and drew back in alarm. The look had come into his eyes, fluctuating, fluttering, dissolving. It was not like George, but a thing untamed. And then they rested on me. With an exclamation I sprang to my feet. I had never seen a being so. With one full bound he was on me.

I did not want to hit him; and yet I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loved my life. He followed me around like a fury—George, George Witherspoon, my companion all my life. Was there anything so incredible? I ducked and crossed and parried. My mind was full of flittings, fleet visions of the past, his life, his honors, his accomplishments, the love we had always had. I saw him as he was a few hours back, the honored of his class. The very night of our graduation. In myriad staccato flashed the doings of our past.

ROUND the room we went. The wine tipped on the table and our clothes were splotched with the liquid. And ever the look grew brighter, scintillating, and intense.

I could hear his tight, hard breathing and see his muscles draw. "I'll get you yet," he muttered.

The intensity of his actions was terrific; he became a catapult; with all the force that was in him he made one last lunge. With the alacrity of fear I sprang out sidewise, clean across the room. I heard a crash beside me. He had fallen.

He was lying full face downward. At first I thought him lifeless; and I remember my eager haste; but when I opened his shirt to examine I found he had merely fallen in a swoon. In a moment I had water and was bathing his forehead.

I have a blurring recollection of it all, the broken chairs, the furniture, the wine all spilled about, my trouser-leg all ripped away, and my shirt front torn most off. And over all the strange, strange silence, and the tick, tick, ticking of the clock.

I was in a fever of alarm at his condition and strove to bring him out, but in spite of all my efforts he lay quite still. Something must be done and quickly. In our struggle the telephone had been kicked upon the floor. I picked it up and called for central. Not an answer did I get. The connection must have been broken.

I knew George's case was beyond my handling. I opened the door and ran hatless down the steps. A storm was gathering, and black, dark shadows mottled all the sky; on the horizon streaks of lightning zigzagged in and out, and a wind was surging from the west. Breathless and panting I rang the doctor's bell.

In a few short minutes we were back again, and found him as he had fallen. The doctor, case in hand, knelt down beside him. I do not know what he did, nor what he found; but when he rose there was a strange, puzzled look upon his face.

"You will help me," he said, "to put him on the bed."

When he had done what he could to ease him, he had me tell my story.

"I think," he said, when I was through, "this is a case for an alienist. Undoubtedly he has a mental trouble. As such he is a little beyond my practice. In the morning I shall have a physician here who is better qualified. I can ease him as far as his body is concerned, and for the night he will lie quite still. For the present there is no need to worry."

We undressed him, and when the doctor was gone I lay down close beside him. All through the night I watched him, while the hours ticked slowly on.

And through it all I wondered, and dwelt upon the past. I remembered the days of long ago, when I first saw his happy face and the joy he had brought into my childhood, the eagerness of his boyhood, his mirth and vim, and frolic, and his certainty of action. Vividly I saw the high marks and the incidents of the past; I recalled the gypsy's visit and fearsomeness of her warning.

And it made me ponder. Could it really have any bearing on the present? What were the meanings of his words? Why should he choose to warn me and of what? Did he wish that I should leave him, I who had loved him all my life, who had been the comrade of his childhood, his room-mate and his chum. And why should I now leave him, what danger could there be; and even if there should be danger, was it not my duty to be near?

I looked on the face beside me; there was a smile upon his lips, he seemed to be dreaming, and I marveled at his beauty. What wonder was it, I was thinking, that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the women always loved him? How easy it had been for him to rollick his way through life, and with his looks and disposition was he really so much to blame? My heart went out to him. That he should come to such an end! It wrenched me deep indeed.

CHAPTER IV

"WHO AM I?"

I DO NOT know quite when it was, but at last I fell asleep. I have a blurred recollection of my dreaming. At first it was indistinct, a mere wild shuffle of kaleidoscopic vistas. I seemed to be wandering, eons, myriads, multitudes of spaces passing by.

All the ages of the past and the future seemed to be, in short, mere movement. I seemed to be all powerful, immense, and all consuming, a thing all light and beauty. I remember the strange, wild pride and the freedom of my movement. I was a brilliant star, a thing of brightness, flashing my way along.

And then, as I recall, I seemed to see a light afar. In the dim, dim distance it was gleaming; so small it was that a needle-point were a magnitude beside; a mere dim point of light! I remember going toward it.

The point of light grew larger and became a ball of fire; it seemed to have a symmetry and to be an awful thing. I recall my wonder and the feeling that I had that it was against all law, and a thing to be avoided.

But still I held my course and flamed my way along. Somehow I had the feeling that I was the one great law, and that nothing could resist me; that I would tame this flashing thing and stop it in its passage.

Nearer and nearer it came, flaming all the way until I could hear the sizzle and the thunder of its coming. And then it was that I flashed into it, went plunging to the crash.

For a moment, I recall, all the infinite seemed a mass of shattered pieces, sparks, and fire, and blazing fragments; there was a sense of grinding and of something passing on. And then it passed on through and over, and went on down the distance, triumphant, never ceasing. All my pride and untamed spirit were gone; broken unto death. Like a thing that's wounded I began to falter and to fall; and all the depths were opened and I shot on down headlong.

And here it was that I awoke.

Will I ever forget that waking?

I seemed to be very far off and to be very, very tired; my body seemed to have grown overnight and my mind all out of tune. I remember holding up my hand and wondering at its bigness, and then at a thing I could not understand, at a ring upon my finger.

Through all my life I had had an aversion for jewelry, and a ring I had never worn. That I should have one on my finger struck me as peculiar; I can't say that it startled me, for my mind was as yet too hazy to do clear thinking.

I had a vague recollection of my dreaming and of the night before; of the doctor's coming, and my struggle with my room-mate. I was conscious in a vague and dawning sort of way of a strength of body, and a vigor hitherto unknown; my arms seemed larger, and the muscles hard, and when I moved my legs they seemed much longer, and to be things of power.

Something stirred down by my side, and I awoke entirely. I remembered George and his strange affliction, and I wondered how he was. He was breathing quietly and was sound asleep, so I sat up softly. I was just about to step down out of bed when he made a little movement and I looked down on him. Will I ever forget that moment! I was speechless! It was not George Witherspoon at all, but my own self I looked at.

For a moment all my thoughts ran crossways, my mind too full to think; I had a strange and haunting fear that I had lost my reason. At the suddenness of the awful thought my heart seemed to swell up in me and to almost choke me. I! I, Walter Warren! Oh, no! Oh, no! It could not be!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But there was no doubting eyesight, so I looked again. There I was as sure as life, lying on the bed and sleeping. There was no doubting. And yet how could it be? I was, and yet I was not! Here I was awaking, and there I was sleeping!

TO RELIEVE the wild, mad working of my brain I pressed my hands against my forehead. The pressure brought a little easement and I began to think more clearly. I surely must be dreaming; there was no need to worry; all I had to do was to crawl in bed and sleep it off.

It was then again that I thought of the ring, and brought it down before me. It was a large ring, and quite heavy, with the letter "G" upon it.

"Ah, well," I said, "I shall go to bed; but first I'll put this on the bureau." Action was as quick as thought, and I drew it from my finger; I was just about to place it down when I looked up in the mirror—I was George Witherspoon!

For a moment I was dazed! It could not be! It could not be! I remember my wild and stricken protest. I surely must be dreaming!

Just then a wagon rattled in the street; I could see that it was morning; that the birds were singing, and that the city was awaking for its work of a summer's day. All the air outside was sunshine, and a ripple of flooding music came—a housewife's morning song. It seemed so real and lifelike that I could not understand.

The window had been left wide open to let in the fresh cool air, and somehow seemed inviting. "Ah, well," I thought, "I shall have a smoke, sit down and watch the world." I remember taking up a pipe and my wonder at the name upon it, whittled out of the wood, the name of George, and my contented puffing, and my thinking. I was quite sure now that I was dreaming, and it amused me. What a strange, queer dream it was; I would tell the doctor.

"Well?"

It was myself sitting up in bed.

"Er—er—er, well yourself," I said.

"When did you get up, George?" it asked.

"Who, me? Say, what do you mean by calling me George? My name is Walter. Walter Warren, if you please."

The other laughed and leaned back on the pillow, and lay apparently thinking; then at length he raised up again.

"Say," he asked in a puzzled tone, "if you are Walter Warren, who the deuce am I?" And as if in answer to his query, he looked into the glass.

It was a stunner.

"Search me," I said. "You are not you, of that I am very certain, neither am I, I; but you are I, and I am you. In other words, I am Walter Warren."

"Bugs," he said, sitting up in bed, "I knew it all the while. Bugs. Good thing the doctor's coming."

"You should say insane."

I had always had aversion for all slang. Bugs was a name I did not like; it made me think of beetles.

"Well, insane then."

"But I am not insane."

"Oh, shut up!"

He got up and started to put on his trousers. Now the ones he reached for were Walter Warren's. I really wasn't going to let him have my pants. It surely could not be.

"Here," he said when I tried to stop him, "you big mutt, what you trying to do?"

"Those are my pants!"

"They're not!"

"They are!"

"Well, then, take them!"

He said it with decision; as though to say, "Try them on and see, you think that you're so smart!"

But I would show him! If this cursed dream would only break! I reached for them and started to pull them on! And then I saw that after all he might be right; I strained and pulled and grunted and burst them at the seams; when I had finished they were a sorry wreck, indeed, lacking two inches at the waist, the seam ripped in the seat, and a full six inches

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too short for me down at the bottom!

"Oh!" he laughed, and lay back on the bed. "Oh!" and laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

MY DIGNITY was all upset. What right had he to laugh? Was I not Walter Warren, the banker's son, and a man of good position? Never before had I been scorned and laughed at in this manner; it hurt me and it cut. In chagrin and disappointment I took the trousers off. "Take the things," I said, and threw them at him.

"So," he said, when he had caught them, "poor little wreckage, I think I'll save them for a souvenir."

He took and hung them in a closet, and then he walked up to my bureau. From the bottom drawer he drew my wedding clothes.

"Here!" I yelled.

"What's this?" he said.

"No! No! No! You can't have them!"

"Why?" he said, eying me. "You poor, big simp. Don't you know that these are my wedding clothes? Tomorrow at the stroke of twelve I am to wed Miss Clara Rohilla."

"You're not!" I screamed.

"Oh, yes I am. At the stroke of twelve. The papers are all drawn; we've kissed each other and I have hugged her."

"You!" I yelled, and made right for him. What a wild fury did possess me; I would kill him. I see myself yet, flying at him.

"Tut," he said, and lifted up his hand.

Somehow something passed clear through me; something deadened, and my arm fell lifeless by my side. I was so dumfounded that I could not speak; a strange and sudden fear came on me. With the strength of me and my muscles I could have broken him into bits and yet I was all powerless; there was that about him that stole from me all volition; he was quite the master.

However, he did not wear my wedding clothes; merely turned them over and caressed them, crooning all the while, and purring, and talking to himself. For the present he was satisfied with an ordinary suit. When he had dressed himself and tied his tie, he tossed me out a bundle.

"Here's your clothes, George," he said, "you had better put them on. They're yours."

He sat on the edge of the bed and watched my nervous handling of his garments, his eyes laughing and his lips leering with an impish pleasure. Out of the corner of my eye I saw it, and though my inner self was grinding and my heart rebellious, there was no resisting. I can't tell why, but in those first few moments he was quite the master. With nervous fingers I pulled them one by one about my body.

There was still whirling in my head that strange, subconscious feeling of a man dreaming, and half conscious of the fact. It seemed so real, so true, and yet it could not be.

When I had finished and stood before the mirror I was really he—George Witherspoon.

"Well," he said at last, "are you satisfied?"

"With what?"

"Why, that you are yourself, George Witherspoon, of course. It's strange, only last night you warned me that I should watch you. You remember, I suppose, the glass of wine, your falling in the chair, the warning that you gave me, and your tenderness?"

"I—"

"Of course, I thought so. But I don't suppose you remember your actions after that, and the wild attempt you made upon my life. You do remember falling and my going for the doctor?"

"I—"

"Of course not. That is something one could not expect. Just the same I have been sitting up all night, and watching. The doctor told me what I might expect and I was not a little worried. Now George—"

The very name upset me.

"But I'm not George," I interrupted.

He raised his eyebrows in alarm.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Pray, who are you?"

"Why," I shouted, "I am you, and you are I. I am Walter Warren."

"Very well," he said, and stood up. "Let's go to breakfast."

And we went.

CHAPTER V

THE REBEL SOUL

NOW I had a throbbing something working in my brain which told me, and which kept repeating that this thing which was, was a thing which could not be. Below at breakfast it would all come right. In the plain light of broad bright consciousness we would resume our proper spheres. Our present status was a thing beyond all reason, and a thing as well against the laws of nature. For how by any psychological, physical, or moral law could I be he, and he be I? Hallucination only could explain it, or a dream.

And yet when we stepped out and started down the stairs I had a feeling of certitude that was appalling. Below, the waiters flitted in and out, the dishes clinked and I could hear the familiar voices.

"What ho!" called a college chum. "How's George this morning?"

Another took me by the hand and laughed and clapped me on the back. "How's our honor man this morning?" Then with a look of admiration, "Say George, if I had your brains, I'd run for President."

For a moment I could not answer, merely took a chair and fondled knife and fork. But my mind was busy, seething like a maelstrom, and the words kept coming, coming. They, even they, have seen it. It must be so. It must be so.

I heard their babble and their talk, laughter and conversation, but it all seemed far away. The room was full of sounds, and well known voices, and over and over again, I heard the names of George Witherspoon and Walter Warren.

At first my mind was far too full for thought or speculation. In the intensity of surrender I could conceive of naught but generalities, worlds and myriads, people, things, and doings of a lifetime sweeping by. It must be so; it must be so; but yet I could not understand. Here I was George Witherspoon, a thing that could not be.

From across the table, a shout of laughter roused me. It was Walter Warren, my own self, my body. I had always been a stern, quiet lad and noted for my silence, and now this jubilating laughter was focusing attention. From Witherspoon it would have been the proper thing; but for Warren—one could just as well have looked for laughter in a rock.

"What do you know about it?" some one was saying.

"Search me," said another, "it surely must be good to make a man like Warren laugh."

"Oh, pshaw," I heard another answer, "to-morrow is his wedding day; he has got it right."

All through the breakfast it was quite the same; Walter always laughing; I, sad and morose. To every quip he gave a parry, and his wit was sparkling; he laughed and talked and bantered, and joked me for silence. And all the crowd was with him. "Say Walter," I could hear, and, "What's got into Warren?"

He even sang a snatch of song, and spoke about the wedding; there was hilarity in his manner, and wit, and vim, and action, all the things, in fact, which hitherto had gone to make George Witherspoon. With the coming wedding for an explanation the boys could understand; for who could not be happy on the eve of his wedding day?

But to myself and myself alone, the thing was beyond all comprehension; I knew now that I was not dreaming; by some means, by some process hitherto unknown, we had traded bodies. Beyond all doubt, I was now George Witherspoon.

I sat in wonder and in study, watching his every act, and trying my best to understand. Back to the days of childhood, through the whole sweep of our lives I followed his every act; I recalled the gypsy's visit, the scene that night before,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the warning. "Could it be," I kept repeating, "could it be that he saw it coming?"

I sat in silence.

There was one thing that I saw quite clearly, and it gave me consolation. Though outwardly my body was another's, I was inwardly in mind and spirit, still Walter Warren. My body now was Witherspoon; I had his grace and beauty and athletic form, but for all of that I was still myself. In the onrush and working of my spirit, in the subtleties of thought I had not changed; I was still stern, and cold and practical, plodding for the things of life.

Even then I saw it. Though he had stolen my earthly body, my spirit was a thing immortal, a thing beyond his reaching, and could not be destroyed.

"Well," he said when we were alone and in our rooms, "are you satisfied?"

"With what?"

"Why, with yourself? Or do you still think it all a dream? Didn't I tell you all along that I am Walter Warren? You yourself heard the boys below talking about my wedding. To-morrow I shall wed Clara."

He laughed exultantly, his eyes, the eyes that once were mine, dancing with an impish glee. Somehow, his every act had the incisiveness of a Satan; his roguish, gloating pleasure goaded me to fury.

"You are not!" I cried. "You shall never have her. I may be George Witherspoon in form, but not in spirit. Whatever you are, imp or devil, you can never tame my spirit; you have stolen my body, and you would steal my wife. I—"

"Sure," he said, laughing, "why not! Did you imagine for a single moment that you were living with a fool? What are good things for, but for the taking? You have a pretty sweetheart and"—he lit a cigarette—"I am going to take her for my wife.

"You don't like it? Well that isn't all I am going to do. I am going in for pleasure, for the wild rollicking, intoxicating, kind. From now straight through, my life will be a dream of heaven. I am Walter Warren."

He laughed again and blew his smoke clouds in the air, his eyes mocking and his smile taunting.

"JUST think," he said, "what it will mean. I am Walter Warren, son of a millionaire, wedded to the belle of the land, petted by papa and mama, the promising young attorney."

And oh, the taunting of that laugh, the impishness of his pleasure!

"You mean," I exclaimed, "to ruin me, to wreck my reputation! You would take the name of Warren and drag it in the mire. You—"

"Tut," he said, and raised his hand. "Please don't be so sudden. Let me put you right. I shall use your body, nothing else. You boasted but a moment ago—and you told an everlasting truth—I cannot touch your spirit."

"But," I begged, "my parents! Surely you will not let them suffer? Can't you see—"

"Nothing; only self and pleasure. That is all there is in living; all the rest is nonsense. Pleasure only we can enjoy; everything else is work. Your love is but a thing of froth; your honor an illusion. Life is nothing but an ego concentrated. I, me, myself, pleasure—nothing else; all the rest is nonsense, a loading of the spirit."

He smiled in a superior sort of way and watched me out of the corner of his eye while he went on with his smoking.

Just then came a knocking at the door, a sort of professional tapping which I had heard before and recognized—the doctor's.

My comrade held his cigarette, expectant.

"Ah," he said, "the doctor."

He looked at me and I at him. But our thoughts were vastly different. With sudden horror I remembered the doctor and his errand—my sanity. For one whole moment I stood quite still, my mind seething, the only sound I heard was the jeering laugh beside me.

Then it was, the door was opened. "Ah, good morning, doctor, so you have brought him with you." There was the sound of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

introduction. "Yes, I think he's better. He is feeling well this morning."

At once my brain awoke.

So this, then, was his game. He was burning all the bridges back of me. If I said but a single word he would have me judged insane. It was then, and not till then that I saw the awfulness of my isolation; no one to tell, no one to sympathize, the workings of my lifetime gone for naught. What would I, what could I do!

The doctors were quite affable; my comrade doubly so.

"So you are feeling better this morning." Our physician laughed. "You had quite a night, last night"; then after a pause; "overstudy, I suppose. It sometimes works that way."

I laughed and tried to seem at ease and act as Witherspoon. I did not wish a keeper.

"Yes, it may be," I said, "a little heart trouble perhaps. I really don't believe it study; if you knew me better doctor it would make you laugh to say it. I do not study much."

"Were you not honor man?"

"Oh, yes," I laughed; "but that does not in my case signify; it just came easy."

I was conscious of the other doctor's watching, of his eyes upon me; I knew that even then he was studying my mental tone and passing judgment. My mind was now made up; I was calm and fine and even; I would not say a word as to what had happened.

My comrade Walter Warren, I that was, and was not, was sitting in the background, his eyes watching, and his look expectant. The conversation went to trivial things; the doctor rose to go.

"This is my busy day," he explained, "and I must be going. I am glad indeed there is no need of my assistance. Before I go, however, I would like a word with Mr. Warren."

He shook me by the hand and disappeared with Walter. From this time on I was to be George Witherspoon.

The other doctor rose.

"Just a word, my lad," he said, "while we're alone."

There was a look of pity in his eyes, and of the greatest interest. He took me by the arm and led me to the window.

"You are not George Witherspoon."

"I—you—" I was afraid of a trap. "What do you mean?"

He smiled.

"Don't be afraid to tell me. I know. You are Walter Warren in the body of George Witherspoon. Come now; is it not so?"

He knew! But how, how, could he see it? It was nonplusing. My heart jumped at the thinking—some one, some one knew, my case was not all hopeless.

"You are right," I said. "I am Walter Warren. But pray tell me who is he—imp or devil, scamp or—"

The doctor clutched me by the arm; a look, I thought, of fear came in his face, his voice was lowered.

"He is the Rebel Soul."

We stood there for a moment, and I let the words sink in; I could not comprehend them.

"Yes," he repeated; "he is the Rebel Soul. All that I can say just now is that you must abide your time. Here is my card. Some day you may wish to see me. At present I am helpless; so are you. Be cheerful."

With that he went; but he left his last words in my heart.

CHAPTER VI

THE HORROR BEGINS

THE doctors gone, I found myself finally settled in another period of existence; I was decidedly and definitely George Witherspoon. I had one small bit of encouragement in the doctor's card and his ambiguous, half promising, "see me"; but somehow I felt that its fruit would be only of speculative interest, and that it would be best for me to acquiesce and to comply with present circumstance.

The doctor had made no speculation nor declaration concerning my sanity; and I had no wish for anyone to go prodding into it. I had the common sense to know,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that were I to say but one word of the truth, I would create instant consternation. Explanation and expostulation would be things in vain; there would be nothing left for me but the scrap heap of humanity.

I was ever a thing of prose, and prone to facts; I was naturally a student. From the very outset, as soon as the fact had dawned and I knew that I was not dreaming, I had sensed the possibilities of our shifting; there was a fact of science here to study, another law of Cosmos.

What would be our relation and what our life, and how would our actions be affected? I was enough of a student to recognize the potentiality of the situation. I was on the inner track where no man had ever been before me; whatever pique and pride it cost for the loss of personality was offset to a great extent by the opportunities of my position.

My comrade was sitting on the table, one foot drawn up and smoking his ever present cigarette.

"Well," he said at length, "are you going with me?"

"Where?"

"Where? Why everywhere, of course; among the boys and girls, and pretty things, where things are always lively."

I sensed his meaning instantly; he was going to take my body with its smug respectability down to the haunts of the vulgar; it would spell disaster should the thing be known; my reputation would be shattered. It was a thing unthinkable and I told him so.

But he only gave his taunting laugh.

"What," he said, "your honor! Pray you, take care of Witherspoon and forget all thought of Warren. Do you suppose, poor child, that you can stop me?"

There never was such impishness. He convulsed himself in laughter.

"Really," he said, "you are talking humor. Poor Walter Warren's honor, indeed, indeed!"

Why it was that I did not kill him, to this day, I do not understand.

"Come on, come on," he said, in the ebbing of his laughter.

"Where?"

"With me. That's it. Now let us be going."

With excessive politeness he procured my hat and placed it on my head.

"Really George," he laughed, "you don't know how well you look."

Right there my plans were settled; I knew I could not stop him. I would go along, and perhaps from utter ruin save a little of my reputation.

In a moment we were in the open street, walking in the sunshine. The air was fresh and living, and the city all a-bustle the birds were singing in the trees, and in the distance I could see the cool, smooth green of the college campus. It really seemed too real. Were it not for the walking proof beside me, I would have still called myself Warren.

We were walking side by side, he clutched me by the arm, allowing an inch or two's advance as if using me for protection. A woman was coming up the street.

"Ah," he said in a purring whisper, "who is she?"

"Who?"

"The dame?"

He doffed his hat and made a sweeping gesture. It was a friend of mine. She smiled and then grew scarlet. There was that about his manner and his smiling, that to a modest woman was everything insulting. The lady almost stumbled; I was wild with indignation.

"Here," I shouted, "what do you mean? That was a downright insult. My—"

"Oh," he said, turning from his staring. "That is so, isn't it? I had forgotten about your honor."

He spoke the last word with insinuation and a sarcasm cutting deep, and there was mocking in his laughter. I might have known that my case was hopeless, and that before the day was over my reputation would be a thing besmirched. It was a case for moderation, calling for cautious wisdom; I saw at once my folly in all expostulation.

It was imperative that we be not seen; a few repetitions of the scene just past,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and my name would be black indeed. We must get to the city.

The very mention of my planning seemed to please him. In a few short moments, we were on our way to the ferry.

WHERE we went that day or what we did, I should be ashamed to tell you. Certain it is that never before had I known such places existed. He seemed to revel in and enjoy it, and excited endless comment; somehow the word went out and up and down the streets that he was Walter Warren.

I reflected then, too late, that I had better held him close at home. My father was a man well-known, of a state-wide reputation, and the very fact that his son was spreeing was a thing to focus notice. He seemed to take pride in telling and boasting of his family.

He became intoxicated; and it was not till evening that I could coax him off. I would get him to a room and put him in a bed; but he would not have it so. When the evening came and the lights were lit, he suddenly remembered.

"Ah," he said, "I must see Miss Clara."

The suddenness of it and the disgrace made me white with fear. Walter Warren intoxicated in the presence of Clara! The ignominy of the thing and the shaming almost choked me.

"Oh," I pleaded, "not that! You are intoxicated; can't you see? The name of Warren will be disgraced forever."

The last words were just the words I should not have uttered. The only business he had in the world was that of disgracing, and the name of Warren was a thing he hated. I could not stop him.

"We shall go at once," he said, "at once." And he reeled on down the sidewalk.

You doubtless think I should have stopped him; but it was a thing I could not do. If you knew, and had my feelings and could understand the power he held over me, you could appreciate my position. There was something indefinable about it, something which I could not understand. His very presence killed volition; I had no initiative whatever, and of courage none at all. I had merely a left-over sense of justice, and a knowledge of right and wrong.

The train bore us from the city. My mind was seething; I hate to think of all I thought, and the fear that was upon me. The name of Warren would be black forever; I, Walter Warren intoxicated and disgusting; I who had always been so good, the embodiment of good breeding, was about to bring insult upon my loved one. There could be no explanation and no excuses. I knew perfectly well this Warren by my side would see to that. I was done forever.

Never could I forget that evening; I shudder to this very day.

We crossed the broad veranda, and went in by the open door. From the floor above, we could hear Clara singing.

"I shall be down in a minute, Walter," came flooding from the stairway.

"It's all right," he answered, "just so long as you come. Isn't it, George?" And he looked over at me.

A flash of panic came upon me.

"Come," I said, and took him by the arm, "you had better get out of this. Come, before it is too late."

He looked up at me.

"No," he said, "I am not going. I must stay and see my wife."

Just then the door was opened and Clara stood in the doorway. I can see yet her horror, her pride, and her cold calm dignity, her beauty that was radiating, her innocence sublime.

"Walter!" she said. "Walter!" Just that.

"Well?" he answered impishly.

"You have been drinking."

Without another word she turned and left us. I could hear the angry swishing of her skirts, upon the staircase; a flood of sobbing followed.

"There," I exclaimed in anger; "you have done it. Now let us go!"

"Just a moment, George."

It was Judge Rohilla in the doorway; he had a newspaper in one hand.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just a moment. I wish to do a little talking."

He did. What he told us was what any indignant parent has a right to say. He gave Walter his special attention, though I came in for my share. In a way I was to blame as having set the example. The lashing was lost on my leering comrade, but to me it was a stinging lesson. Of course I could make no explanation; there was not a thing I could do but take it. Take it and leave the house—forever.

CHAPTER VII

DISGRACE

THE wedding was broken off; my parents notified. In the morning came my father. There could be no understanding of his son's queer actions, excuse, or explanation; he was a thing as cold as ice. With him a thing that was, was a thing that was; sin was sin, and error, error; there was no middle course. He had a cold affection, and no forgiveness in his nature.

We were bundled off for home. I had never had such a great affection for my father; I respected him and loved him to be sure, but it was only the feelings which his coldness and aloofness would allow, there was no sentiment overflowing. Though it hurt me, I could bear his sorrow.

But at home was another thing entirely. My mother was heart-broken; I could not bear her weeping. Her son, her own son, had done a thing disgraceful! After all the promises of years, after all my hard endeavors, I had gone the road to ruin. It wrenched my heart to think of it.

Circumstances demanded explanation.

In the afternoon, Walter, I that was, and was not, stole away and went to drinking. I stole out after him; it was evening time before I found him and brought him back: he was disgraceful.

My father was ashen-white with anger; my mother broken with her weeping. I hurried him into bed; and called them to me.

Although I did not hope for belief or appreciation, I was resolved to tell my story. It was a thing so improbable and impossible that I doubted that they would hear me. But clearly it was my duty. I would tell my tale and let them do the judging.

I told my story.

My mother did not stir. My father merely rose; in the half-light I could see the scorn upon his features.

"A pretty tale indeed," he sneered, "a pretty tale indeed! I have heard of many lame excuses but this one is the climax. One would think that we had just stepped out of the 'Thousand and One Nights' of the Arabians."

Then he gathered himself together.

"Look here, George Witherspoon, during the last few hours I have studied up your record. I have found it one of shame, of dissipation and carousal; your life has been abomination, you have brought disgrace upon us. For your father's sake I raised you and treated you as a son. He was a man of noblest nature; a man of brilliant parts; I expected you to follow him. Instead you have dishonored him; the name of Witherspoon you have trampled in the mire. And this is not the worst, you have dragged my son down with you.

"As for the tale you just told, it is a thing to laugh at. How could any man of a sane, calm mind believe anything so ridiculous? Your lying is worse than your infamy. Hitherto I have been to you as a father. I say to you now—begone. Leave the house to-night and forget that you have ever known us."

With that he opened the door and stamped out into the hall-way. My mother was weeping softly.

"Father," I called; "oh, father."

There was no response.

My mother came up to me and put her head upon my shoulder.

"George," she whispered. "George, oh, my Georgie!"

I put my hand upon her forehead and looked into her tear-filled eyes.

"Then you, even you, don't believe me, mother?"

Silently she shook her head.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It is so impossible. A thing which never was, and a thing which never can be. You are overwrought and need a rest. Forgive poor Mr. Warren. Go out and be a good brave boy and show him that he's wrong. I know you are not wicked and that things will all come right. There now—"

She patted me on the cheek and kissed me.

It was a thing most final; she did not believe me. Though her tenderness was most soothing, all the light of the world had left me.

In another hour I was packing, not things of my own, but George's. I was going I knew not where. It seemed so like a dream; my mind was hazy, and unsteady with the intensity of its sorrow, there was no sequence to my thinking, thoughts flittered here and there; it was a thing that could not be. Half-dazed I stumbled out the doorway, into the silent street. One look I took behind me. I was alone in the wide, wide world.

For the next few days I was most unsettled. I took a room down-town and while my mind was clearing, while I was awaiting the vision of actual reality, I spent my time in looking round me.

It was a hazy time of dread and fearing, of groping in the dreamland. I had a misty consciousness that it could not be so, that I must still be dreaming. The breaking of my home ties was the crash that broke me; were it not for that I could have borne up.

FOR some days I wandered round doubting. I was now George Witherspoon—all his friends and cronies told it to me. In mind as well as body, I found myself another.

Now that I was alone and could contemplate, I was conscious of the change. There was a difference, slight and undefined and yet most startling; were it not for loss of personality and pique of pride I had reasons to be elated. The brain I now possessed was stronger, better oiled and of freer movement; I could think more clearly and with more perception; I had an elasticity and a freedom which I had hitherto not known.

Stored away in the brain-cells of this mind were thoughts I had not dreamed of; I was continually stumbling into this and that and things most curious. The nature of my spirit made me study, and with the store now at my disposal and the machinery for its action I was quite a thinker.

Ambition is natural to all men of solid thinking. In a few days the novelty of my situation wore off its edges. Circumstances I could not alter; so I must work. I would show them by indefatigable grit and grinding that I was a man of parts and most solid.

I had my reward.

It was not long before the whole of my home city was conscious of my merit; my proficiency was acknowledged; my ability admired; I became a leading lawyer. The clear, bright brilliancy of the brain on which I'd fallen sprang at the driving of my cold, stern spirit. My work was everlasting; there seemed no goal that I could not reach, no work I could not accomplish. The triumph of my scintillating eloquence excited wonder, the rapid flashings of my brain-mind called up admiration. My old companions—George Witherspoon's—were amazed and puzzled; it was not their prophecy; I was to be, according to their tenets, a thing of joy and wantonness, rollicking my way along; I was to have great ability and to do some work; but it was not to be after such a manner as this.

I did not drink, was temperate, and had no vices. The very essence of my being focused into work and crystallized into success. It was strange and wonderful and awe inspiring, and had it been my own would have filled me with conceit.

People made me an example, I was the paradox of youth. Everything I should have been was just the thing I wasn't. All the laws of association and environment were broken; I was just the thing they said I couldn't be. They wondered.

And what of Walter Warren?

If I was a thing of wonder and made

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men wag their heads he, indeed, was doubly so. There was no understanding the enigma. All the laws of blood and breeding were as naught.

From the very first, from his early childhood, he had given promise. He was Walter Warren, the banker's son, and as such, a lad of standing. Cold and steady like his father, he had a way of quietness and of calm reserve, of steadiness, and of great resolve that spoke the future. He did not laugh like other children. Ambition seemed to be his one sole thought, of doing honor to his family, all his actions were so centered, his pathway non-diverging. Everything that spoke of promise had been his, all through his youth time; his friends were all expectant.

To every one the thing was incomprehensible, they could not understand it. He had come home steeped in all the vices, there was no degradation that he did not reach, no disgrace that he did not strive for. The only pride that he took was in dishonor; he drank, caroused, and gambled, he kept low company and flaunted his wickedness in the open street.

Were it not that it was he, and he a Warren, it would not have created such wonder. But being Walter, a lad of such great promise and strict, stern antecedents, there could be no judging, no understanding human nature.

Most of all it hurt my parents. Under the load of sorrow and disappointment my father aged quickly. I did not see my mother often, but when I did my heart went out to her. There was suffering in her face and silent anguish; she was weighed and bowed down with a mother's grief, and the weight and worry of an unrequited hope.

"Oh, George," she once told me, "if only he were like you. I cannot understand it. He was once so good. All his friends have forsaken him. Can't you, won't you talk to him? He once loved you so!"

If only she could have understood.

I always tried to comfort her. Although it hurt me to see her suffer there was some consolation in being near her; her grief was, after all, for no one but myself, there was balm in knowing of her love, and encouragement in her hope, which was never failing.

Somehow I had a feeling it would all come right. Nothing can go against the laws of Nature; she rights herself and always, even though she sometimes does things fantastic.

I hunted up the doctor's card, the alienist who had come to see me. He was Dr. D. C. Van Allen and had offices in the city. He alone of all the world knew my true identity. I went to see him.

Unfortunately he had gone abroad. When would he return? They did not know. He was in Vienna and would be gone at least a year.

I wrote a letter, and in course of time, after I had almost forgotten it, received an answer. It was encouraging but indefinite. I was not to despair but wait; in the course of time it would all come right. For the present there could be nothing done. He did not give any explanation —merely stated that he enclosed his card, a plain one bearing on the front the name—

Dr. D. C. Van Allen

Vienna

On the back was a figure 7.

The number on the back struck me as significant. Many months before, in the first days of my exile, I had found in the possessions of George Witherspoon a card all blocked with sevens, arranged in diamond shape like this:

```
   7
  777
 77777
777777
 77777
  777
   7
```

It had struck me as odd, and I had placed it in my pocket. Why the seven on the back of the doctor's card? It struck me as peculiar.

I became prosecuting attorney. My popu-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

larity and ability had got me the office with little opposition. With my mind and spirit, stern and strict, seeing little to condone in sin, I was well qualified for the position. Always I worked for conviction; I had a way of work and strife and fighting, and pressure unrelenting that usually won my cases. It was known to all offenders that my jurisdiction was a place to be avoided.

My friends among substantial people were legion. Even my father somewhat loosened and came to see me.

"George," he said, "you are a man. I am proud of you."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVENS

ONE night I had been visiting a friend who lived back toward the hills in the suburbs of the city. It was about eleven o'clock and I was returning. As the air was balmy and the time was summer I preferred to walk. There is an enjoyment to the fragrance of a good cigar that has no equal.

I had received word some time back from Dr. Van Allen. He had promised to come and see me. The air was ripe for meditation. What would be the outcome of his visit? I pondered my way along, dreaming, wondering, speculating, pulling at my cigar and watching its bright glow in the darkness. For some vague reason, destiny perhaps, I took my way through the shadows of the park.

In such a place as this one naturally feels lonely. I don't know why, but the feeling came upon me that I must have company. To this day, I don't know why I stopped and listened.

Ahead of me some one was walking; I could hear his footsteps upon the cindered pathway, and I thought I could hear another, softer, stealthy, trying to avoid all noise. I hurried ahead and came upon them, two figures dimmed in shadow, one ahead and the other stalking after.

What sort of play was this I wondered? I would watch them. Of my presence they were unaware; and to be doubly sure I stepped out on the grass and crushed out the light of my cigar.

Just as I did so the place lit with the flash of a revolver. Involuntarily I sprang out. The figure behind rushed forward and swung its arm at its fallen victim. I was at him in a second; but I was too late.

Whether he saw me, I do not know; but he straightened up as if satisfied, jumped across the pathway and disappeared in the darkness. At the fleeting shadow I let drive a parting shot; just one, any more was useless—the man was gone.

I turned to the man beside me. One look told that he was dead; he had been shot through the heart from the back and had been stabbed in half a dozen places. I struck a match and held it to his face.

It was Dr. Van Allen!

For a moment I was powerless! The terribleness of the deed and suddenness was enough; but the recognition of the man unnerved me.

Some one came upon us.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Here you!" I exclaimed. "Give me a hand. I am District Attorney Witherspoon. This man's been murdered."

In a moment we had the police and an ambulance. At headquarters I told all I knew and then having done all that could be done returned to my rooms.

But I did not sleep; my mind was far too full. Why should it be Van Allen? The only link I had to my real existence was gone forever. I pondered it over and over, the only link! The only hope! All that held me to the outer world! He had come to see me. Why should it be? I kept repeating: Why should it be? Who could have done it?

All through the night I tossed and worried, and slept and dreamed in fitful starts. The face, the deed, the picture, I could not get away from. When morning came I was tired and worn, my eyes blood-shot and weary. I had a raging headache.

That morning I did but little work; I had a dizzy feeling, a faintness, and my head kept aching harder. At noon I left

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the office and at two o'clock was sick in bed.

A time of dreams and fantoms followed, a desert of interminable, wearied tossings, incoherent and indistinct. I was in the blazing desert that I never seemed to cross; I was dying for a drink. I remember the pools of water in the distance, the people standing by and the fighting of the fever.

At last I awoke. I was in a sick-room, nurses flitting in and out. Raising my hand I saw its weakness; it was wan and weak and thin; a nurse brought me a glass of water. How long had I been sick? Oh, a few days; but I must go to sleep. I lay and wondered; then I slept.

When I awoke again I was a great deal better; I asked for papers. They brought them in; but they would not let me read them; they read them to me.

The nurses all were women; so I heard various things, odds and ends, jokes, what Lady Gordon wore in court when she divorced her husband and how little Bertha Vanderspoot had swallowed a golden tack.

"Oh," I said, "give me some men's news."

So they read me the sports; baseball, golf, and horse races, and how the Pacific Murderer had cut to ribbons in four murderous bloody rounds the Michigan Assassin, a thing that I detested.

"Oh," I moaned, "not that! Give me the news. Have they found the man who did the deed out in the park? What do the papers say?"

They would not tell me. I was told to lie still and not let things like that worry me.

Finally the doctor came. I told him that he must tell me. He took my temperature. "Ah," he said, "a great improvement." There was no reason why I could not be treated like a man. What was it that I wished to know?

"Have they found the man who did the deed out in the park?

"Why—er, yes."

"Who is he?"

"Walter Warren."

I fell back on the pillow. For a moment I could not comprehend. It could not be Walter, no, no, no, not he! My weakness would not allow clear thinking; there was only a wild, mad whirling—Walter Warren!

IN A few days I was better and could sit up. I was in a strange position. Now that I could do clear thinking, I did some speculating. I was prosecuting attorney. Walter Warren was up for murder. Walter Warren was myself. I must prosecute, convict, and hang him, in other words myself. I must disgrace my parents, vituperate and villify my body. Was there ever a task like this?"

At last I could get down to the office. My father came to see me. He was ten years older.

"George," he asked, "are you going to prosecute Walter?"

His sorrow grieved me.

"I do not know," I answered. "I don't like it. You know my oath of office. I think I shall turn the case over to my assistants."

"You are so able, George," he said, "I would like to have you defend him. You, and only you, can acquit him."

But this thing could not be.

The case was in the papers. Walter and George had been playmates all through childhood. Naturally it was a feature. I was worried by the reporters. "Would I prosecute?" I told them I did not know. It became a famous case.

It happened about this time that I had occasion to take a trip to the city. I had not been there for some time, so I thought I would take in the theater, stay all night and return in the morning. I did not have much time to catch my train, so I had to dress in a hurry.

As I was thrusting my arm in the sleeve of my coat something fluttered to the carpet. I stooped and picked it up. It was the card all blocked with sevens. I thrust it in my pocket. In a few minutes more I was on train.

It was always a pleasure with me to take these trips to the city. I would spend the time loitering, peering into windows, seeking odds and ends, watching passers-by. I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liked to watch the ebb and flow; the whirling of the streets.

On this particular day I struck a street peculiar, the buildings fair in size, quaint, and of a type old-fashioned, given over to a medley of fascinating things. There were curio stores, antique dealers, shops of rare old books, a museum, and many other things. In such a place I was a browser. I went from place to place, purchasing now and then, but mostly seeing. It was one of my ways of pleasure.

Half-way up the street, I came to a building more striking than the rest; a place of solid brick work with only a door in front, there were no windows or adornments, a sheer, bleak, solid wall. I do not know what called me; but I went up to it. The door was blocked with sevens. Their position and arrangement the same as on the card.

7
777
77777
7777777
77777
777
7

Each figure was of solid metal and set in a black metallic background.

I took the card from my pocket and held it up. There was surely some connection. Then I tried the door. At the touch it yielded.

I found myself in a long, low vestibule into which three swinging glass doors opened; the walls adorned with fantastic patterns, and a single incandescent light throwing a weak, unsteady gleam into the corners. Under the light an old man dressed in a faded black uniform was reading a magazine. Rather he had been reading, for at my entrance, he was looking up.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "George Witherspoon! Well, well, well!"

He shook me by the hand and took my card.

"Why," he said, "you are such a stranger! It has been years since we have seen you. Where have you been? Where have you been?" Then without waiting for explanation, "I suppose you have come to see the master."

He shook me by the hand and seemed quite pleasant. Certain it was he was glad to see me. Beyond a doubt it was a haunt of George's in the days gone by. I was curious to see what it meant, and what it led to, what there was here that George sought out, and why he should have been so welcome. There was something odd here, an atmosphere of a temple, a place of mystery.

"Yes," I said, "I have come to see the master."

"Ah."

He led the way to the front of the passage, and opened the door.

We were in a strange, queer hall, with most peculiar dimensions, an auditorium shaped like a great square funnel. At the further end and small part of the funnel was a platform, in the back of which a light was burning, a great white light, lighting up in noon-day brilliancy a table directly beneath it, at which was seated amid a pile of books and scattered parchments, a black-robed figure, grayhaired and very old.

Undoubtedly the master.

Instinctively, my heart went to him. There was a look about his face of peace and kindness, an expression superior, as of another world, and of wondrous wisdom. There was no resentment, nothing of malice at all about him; one knew at once that he was not like other men, that here all selfishness was forgotten, narrowness and pride. Hardly had he the look of man, but rather of an angel.

The man beside me nodded. "The master," he said, almost in reverence.

On both sides of the hall were doors and windows, and a number of little rooms, in some of which were lights and people. All was silent, except now and then the clatter of a typewriter, which, indeed, was the only thing to lend reality.

We went down to the platform. On nearer approach I saw that my first view

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was mistaken. The man was not on the platform, but in a room behind it, a room with walls of glass.

My companion quietly opened the door and motioned me to enter, then back he went to the vestibule.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASTER

THE Master put aside his book and rose to greet me; there was a look of pleasure on his face, and satisfaction.

"Well, well, well," he greeted, "you have come at last, Walter Warren!"

He knew! How did he know?

"Yes," I said, "I have come indeed, but my name is Witherspoon. District Attorney Witherspoon. Perhaps you know me?"

He held my hand in his and put his other hand on my shoulder. There was no denying those honest eyes; he read my very soul.

"I know all," he said. "Pray sit down. I was afraid Dr. Van Allen did not see you."

"Van Allen! He is dead!"

"I know, I know, but did he not see you?"

"No."

"Strange. Then how did you happen to come here?"

"Just accidentally. I noticed the number on your door which happened to coincide with the number on a card that I found in my pocket. A mere coincidence."

"Well," he mused, "that's strange. Just Providence. We sometimes think happenings are mistakes, but they never are. All things have their meaning; everything has its uses. You just happen to come!"

He pondered for a moment seeming to lose himself in thought.

He knew my true identity. Once more I had a ray of hope. Undoubtedly he had gotten it from Van Allen. My case was not entirely hopeless.

"Pardon me," I asked; "but you called me Walter Warren, who, indeed, I really am. Did Dr. Van Allen—"

He raised his hand.

"No, hardly. I knew before Van Allen. You thought you were alone. My boy, you were watched by a hundred persons. I have known your every movement."

"Then you can help me?"

"I do not know."

My hopes were dashed down to the ground. He knew and had known all along, and yet was helpless. Could it be possible? No, no, he surely could do something!

"It is a long story," he said at length, "wonderful and quite inexplicable; your case is the only one on record. Viewed from the eyes of the common man it is a thing that cannot be; beyond all law and reason, a paradox. You are beyond our teaching, all our beliefs, and all our understanding. You are a thing that cannot be.

"We are all of us given up to facts and proven realities. We believe just what we see and know and understand and nothing else. You are an enigma, a thing beyond our rules of thinking, beyond all calculation. There are, perhaps, outside of ourselves, not a half a dozen people who would believe your story.

"But to us—myself, and those who are working with me—you are a revelation, a proof beyond all dreams of hoping. You are the thing we sought for, the great intangible, the definite exposition of the unknown law. You have freed us from materiality."

"You mean?"

"Just this. We had become too material. Unable to find the great intangible, unable to select anything else whereon to base our arguments we had fallen to mud and clay. We had come to believe in the all-sufficiency of man, to regard him as self-thinking and complete.

"Those of us who had studied mind had been led away by the completeness of our findings. Thought was but cerebral movement, the stirrings of the brain, induced by nervous action. Everything came from man himself; his thoughts were born within him, full formed, full flame, burning and alive. Out of the void of nothingness he created thought. A thing divine arose from the gross material.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"WE REDUCED it all to a perfect science. The working of the intellect was gone over. We tabulated, sorted, figured, numbered, and set everything in place. The thing was all complete; emotions, habits, consciousness, conception, imagination, and perception, reason, instinct, and the will. We call it science. And so it is.

"But there were some of us who went still farther. There must be something else. Man is something more than an automaton, a machine of flesh and blood. Back of all our thinking and its miracles of action is a thing intangible, a something which controls in a definite way the workings of our intellect.

"We could only use our reason. Against the citadel of the great unknown, we could only employ our logic. We went back to the teachings of our fathers. Without the spiritual teaching of the ancients, all our splendid learning was worthless. We would put the two together.

"We had our arguments and our reasons. Man, we assumed, is like a locomotive, an ugly comparison to be sure, but very apt. The locomotive has its separate parts, its boilers, wheels, pistons, and in the cab a maze of levers. It does its work; goes fast and slow; toots and whistles as the case may be. To see it coming down the track it has all the grace of living, an animation that is inspiring; to the savage coming from the wilds, it has ever been a thing of life, a monster. And yet we know its secret; whence it gets its power, the force coming from its boilers, and how through the brainwork of the levers its workings are controlled. When the engineer is seen it has lost its mystery.

"Let us see just what he does. First, he gives volition, he starts and stops, speeds up, and slows, and then reverses. He gives to the thing of iron and steel his own individuality. Let one, two, five, a dozen engineers drive a locomotive and with each she is a different engine; her individuality changes, her actions and responses.

"This is the attitude we took toward man. Driving the perfect engine of our science must be an engineer; the thing must have an individuality; the man must have a soul. We must take the teachings of the past and present and put the two together. This was a thing not easy. We could only use our reason, logic, and a deal of thinking. We had never seen a soul; nor had we any hope, and have none yet of seeing one. Such things are forever shrouded and hidden from conception; man can never hope for such as this, until he has risen to a higher level, until through the course of slow evolution he has lifted himself to a plain of half spirit.

"There remained but work and study, going over things of the past, and the watching of the present. Into every walk of life we ramified. Our emissaries and investigators cover all the earth. We are of every profession, trade, and labor; our work is never ceasing. We investigate, watch and wait, and classify our knowledge.

"For the convenience of our work we have gone back and combed through history. All the minds and intellects that bear resemblance we have put together and have given names. Not only has it helped us in our study, but in our history. That each one fits a groove, and man moves toward a given end, has been our finding. Were it not for certain things, after going over it, one would become a fatalist indeed. These things are what we call the Rebel Souls.

"We call them so from their very nature and because we cannot understand them. They upset, turn back, consume, destroy, and are selfish. I shall give you some examples; two I shall take from ancient and two from modern history. Alcibiades and Alexander are the older, Charles XII and Napoleon the later.

"What about them? They are selfish and egotistical, all-knowing and inspiring; the pathway of their lifetime is full flame with the light of action. To the limits of their intellect there seems no measure, to the secret of understanding there is no ken. So mighty is their spirit, so transcendent the splendor of their genius that they seem a thousand men in one.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"THE Rebel Soul appears. The world is going smoothly, cog in cog, everything, man, time, and even wars are working toward a given end. Straightaway all is altered. Mankind is all absorbed and all is mighty conflict. Civilization reels and staggers with the fury impact. The greatness of his spirit overshadows, the colossal fame of his far-flung glory bears down all the world.

"There is no resistance. Nations, honor, religions, institutions fall. What was the rule of many becomes the rule of one. Customs, morals, and the laws of man are merely playthings to be used if found convenient, but if not, to be broken and trampled.

"His only law is self. His spirit is titanic; his egotism matchless. The working of his genius is past all explanation; his mind seems hardly human; there is nothing he does not grasp and without apparent effort. Man cannot understand him. He breaks up history and diverts it, absorbs all his generation, puts his stamp on everything, and finally—fails and disappears.

"Alcibiades found Athens the queen of the ancient world. He left her a cringing slave. He lived for her, absorbed her, careered in a blaze of glory, betrayed, forsook her, loved himself. His life was a failure. He was the essence of selfishness and genius; but he changed all history.

"And so Napoleon. The greatness of his spirit will never be known, nor his selfishness understood. He bore down on the course of history like a flaming thing, absorbed it, twisted it out of shape and went his way. We cannot understand him.

"They were Rebel Souls.

"There are others, of course. Some in private life perhaps; but these are noted ones. All of them are noted for their selfishness and for their genius. Whatever they want they have; there is no resisting.

"George Witherspoon, we have called a Rebel Soul. Dr. Van Allen did it. When George was still a lad he heard of him from a gypsy woman, found him out and watched him. His teachers and some of his professors, who happened to be among our numbers, studied him carefully. They all agreed with the doctor; they dubbed him a Rebel Soul.

"He was a genius beyond all doubting. There was no way to understand his flashlight thinking. To him there was no need for study; he learned by intuition. Vivacity, action, personality, beauty, all were his—and selfishness. We induced him to come and see us. He told us many things; interested in our working, and pleased with our sympathy, he laid bare his very soul. We told him what we thought him, the perils that lay before him, and his need for caution.

"He laughed. 'I may be that and then some, without it doing any harm. But there is one thing that I want to know.' He tapped his forehead. 'There are two of us up here.'

"We could not understand it, and could only tell him to be careful. It might have been instinct, premonition, or that wonderful way of telling futures that was his; but he seemed to know. You, his roommate, and whom he loved above all else, he did not tell; because as he said, you would only laugh.

"For what happened we were totally unprepared. It was beyond all dreaming. But it taught us. Man is something more than mere material. Here was a manifestation. We went to work. Dr. Van Allen recognized the thing at once—the changing of the spirit. During the reposing of your bodies that part of you which is eternal, and of the Infinite, wandered into Cosmos. It was there that you got mixed. When you returned your own abode was taken up, so you did just what we always do in mortal life, took what was left for you.

"The strange part of it, however, is not that it was done, but that you remembered. You to yourself are still Walter Warren, whereas according to our reasoning you should be Witherspoon and he be Warren, although o vastly different personalities. You should not be conscious of the shifting. In other words, the day after the graduation you should have been George Witherspoon, vastly changed, but uncon-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scious of the reason. The strange part of it all, and the lucky part for us, is that you remember. Had you not, no one, not even yourself would have known it.

"Perhaps, there is no telling, these things have happened many times. We have a friend; his whole personality changes; he reforms, grows great, or goes straight to the dogs; we do not understand it. It is wonderful how little, after all, we really know. Perhaps—"

He fell to musing.

"And then," I asked at length, "am I condemned to be always District Attorney Witherspoon?"

"I don't know. Really Mr. Warren, I cannot tell you. Dr. Van Allen went to Vienna to see if he could not find something that would bear upon your case. When he returned he went straight to you. I did not know, except by telegram, of his arrival. However, you must not give up hope. We have wonderful resources. The greatest talent in the world is in our institution. It is all at your disposal.

"One little bit of advice, however, I can give you. Beware of the man who now goes by the name of Walter Warren."

CHAPTER X

A TOAST

IN THE morning I returned to my office and to my duties. I had definitely decided not to conduct the prosecution. The feelings of sorrow and of sympathy which I held for the position of my parents made the decision imperative. I would have nothing whatever to do with the case.

I let the decision be known immediately. Out of consideration for my former comrade, and for the Warrens, and because under the circumstances I did not think myself capable of doing full justice to the case in behalf of the community, I had turned it over to my assistants.

For Walter Warren himself I had the greatest pity. He was, after all, myself, disgraced, dishonored, and about to die. Though the Master had given warning, I had no fear. I would go and see him.

My position as prosecutor procured me an easy access. The jailer led me to the cell, opened it to let me enter, then went his way.

Walter was seated on the edge of his cot, his knees crossed, and humming, nonchalant, unconcerned and apparently quite happy. For a moment he did not notice me, but as I did not speak, merely stood there, his eyes drifted to the corners and he began to laugh.

"Well," he said, "why don't you say something?"

"Seems to me," I answered, "that it is about your turn. What have you to say for yourself? I hope you have had your dream of heaven. If what you have been through is a fair sample, I am willing to renounce my hopes and anticipations right now. Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

He straightened himself out on his cot, his hands clasped back of his head. The smile on his face was broad and mocking, his black eyes dancing.

"So," he laughed, "so. Same old sober socks. Why my dear, I have had the life of lives. I have enjoyed myself immensely. Everything I wanted came just as I asked it. It has been just what I said—a dream of heaven."

There was no repentance, nothing but sheer devil. He seemed to care for nothing, his position and his circumstances did not worry him.

"I should think," I snapped, "that such a close acquaintance with the hangman would at least be awesome."

It only made him laugh the louder.

"So you think that I shall hang! Why you poor old simpleton! There is not in all the land enough of law or rope to reach half around my neck. Calm yourself; pray calm yourself. So you really think that you have got me? Indeed? Indeed?"

I had expected to find a man repentant, and down-hearted, rejected and broken. Even as his body had been worn away, frail and exhausted, I had thought to find his spirit. His nonchalance and exuberance were all unlooked for, and it puzzled me. He was the same old rebel; and would

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stand for no restraining. I tried to argue and convince him; but it was useless. Shame, pride, he did not know them, only self.

"Then," I asked at last, "you admit that you are guilty? You did this awful deed? You murdered this innocent doctor?"

"Certainly. I killed him. Call it murder if you like. What right had he to live when I chose that he should die? It was not good for me that he be living and so I killed him. I was right. Your laws mean nothing to me, nor your codes and morals. I am living for myself."

It was useless for me to argue. There was no taming such a spirit; with neither heart, nor morals, nor slightest touch of honor, there was nothing to appeal to. I reached my hand back for the door.

"Hold on," he said, "before you go, get me a glass of water." He raised himself up and held out his hand. "I am so thirsty."

He seemed so weak and wan, and his body so frail and broken, that in spite of all my loathing I could not help but pity.

"Thank you."

He took the glass in his shaking fingers and held it up before him.

"Here's to the man that's going to be hanged and it's not going to be yours truly."

There was impishness and a gloating in the eyes he raised up at me; a look I had never seen before was in them—anticipation, triumph.

"Here goes."

He drank it at a gulp and passed me back the glass. Somehow there was something final about it all that impressed me; abandon, fearlessness, and certainty was his; that he would cheat justice was a thing I did not doubt. No thoughts of fear had I, but wonder. What would he do; how could he do it?

There was something in the bottom of the glass, white, and saltlike, from which a fume was rising. I did not understand it. I had given him only water and he handed me back this. What could it be? What did it mean. I smelled it.

It was—it was—what was it?

Something deadly and destroying. The tiny cloud went up through my nostrils, and my brain seemed all in fog. My mind seemed deadened. I remember the wild clutch of apprehension at my heart, and the need for action; but I could not move. The world seemed all a blur and sounds all distant. My hands reached for my forehead and I started for the door. There was no door—yes, there it was, way, way, off, far, far in the distance—why should it be so far?—then blackness.

WHAT happened I did not know. I was cold and sore; and my arm was dead asleep from lying on it. In the bewilderment of waking I stared about me. The little narrow walls, and the quietness puzzled me. My room was not like this, and I had no recollection of coming to it. And why was the bed so hard? Wonderingly I put my hand down to it. There were neither quilts, sheets, nor mattress, merely cold hard stone—I was lying on the floor.

For a moment I lay a thinking, trying to understand. I felt weak and sick, and when I raised my head I was nauseated. My mind seemed all in a flurry, and refused to come together; the world seemed rocking and reeling and things were all unbalanced. I closed my eyes and tried to reason; I could not understand it.

A voice broke in upon me.

"Hey you," it rasped, "get out of that! Get up!"

In a vague way I recognized the voice. It was Simpson the jailer, though what in the world could he have to do with me? Why his curtness? Then I recollected coming to the prison; I must have fallen in a swoon and he was calling me. Why so brusk? Surely it was no common thing to see a district attorney swoon, and lying on the floor of a prison cell. I opened my eyes. I was terribly thirsty.

"Ah," I said, "Simpson, you will open the door and get me a drink of water."

"I will not."

"You—"

What did he mean? What effrontery was this—impertinence! I sat up.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Simpson, open that door. What do you mean! I must have been taken ill. I must be going. I am sick. Open that door."

"Say," he asked, like one provoked, "who the deuce do you think you are?"

"Who? Why, District Attorney Witherspoon of course! Why all this nonsense? Open that door! I—"

An angry face was looking at me.

"You little runt! Get up on that cot and cut out your foolishness. Come now, we'll have no more nonsense. This is the twentieth time this week that you have thrown that very fit and wound up by calling yourself the district attorney!"

What did the man mean? Who could he be talking to? Then I remembered Walter. I looked upon the bed and around the cell; save for myself the place was empty.

For a moment my mind was whirling, I could not make it out—and then it all came to me. I was Walter Warren.

CHAPTER XI

TRAPPED

I DID not stir; I could not, the revelation made me helpless. I did not know until that moment what it was to be really frightened. Not even the eyes of the jailer there upon me could distract me from it. I really trembled.

"Well," he shouted, "are you going to do it, or will I have to come in there and throw you on the bed?"

Was ever a man more wretched?

"Oh," I said pitifully, "I can do it. I meant no harm. Please let me alone."

"Well, get busy."

Weakly I crawled up on the bed and pulled up the coverlet. I felt like a cringing coward, weak and worthless, and I did not want the man to be looking at me.

"Go away," I pleaded, "go away."

"Humph," he muttered, watching, "you little runt. Of all the actors that I've seen, you beat them all. I have never seen one like you."

Then he went mumbling down the corridor and I was left alone.

And well, indeed, it was for me; I needed time for thinking. I was Walter Warren, my own true self at last, but oh, how different. Even in my voice I noticed my timidity, the piping sound, and the cringing of my spirit. All my nonchalance, poise and confidence were gone; the attorney was no more. I, who was looking from heights had fallen, and what a difference now it was looking up from the bottom of the chasm. There was no hope at all, no ray of light, no gladness. I was a murderer, hated of all the world and hopeless. The abjectness of my condition filled me with self-pity. I fell to crying. Rolled up in the blankets there I shed my tears and tried to soothe my spirit.

Everything that I had was gone, home, life, honor, and position. What would a judge, sitting in a sober court think of a tale like this? What would the lawyers do? What would George Witherspoon—it made me think—what would he do? Had he taken my position? Undoubtedly we were now our normal selves. Even as I was now myself, and what he had been a few hours back, so was he now George Witherspoon, the prosecuting attorney.

Was ever a fate so twisted? First he had robbed me of my birthright, love, home, honor, and position, and had ruined all. My body he had worn away, wasted with carousal. My parents were broken-hearted, my friends were gone; there was no place to turn to. Such was my position. Everything that I had worked for in the last five years was now all his. All the credit of my striving, the applause and reputation had been stolen. He was now George Witherspoon. Was ever a man so cheated? Was ever a man so hopeless! The only end to it all that I could see was the shadow of the gallows.

Toward evening the jailer came back again; this time smiling.

"Hello, runt," he greeted, "I have got a present for you."

"Who from?"

"From the district attorney, from Mr. Witherspoon. See!" And he shoved me in a paper.

I took it eagerly and crawled back on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my cot. On the front page in great black letters were the words:

WITHERSPOON CHANGES MIND
Will personally conduct the prosecution of Walter Warren

Below followed his statement:

Owing to the great friendship which formerly existed between this man and myself and the circumstances of our childhood, I was at first averse to personally conducting the prosecution. However, I have certain duties clear and defined, and these have compelled me to make investigations. What I have learned has led me to the course which I have finally adopted.

Everything which I have found has proven to me that Walter Warren is one of the foulest and most heartless criminals of modern times. For such a man there is but one place, and but one duty for a prosecutor. When a man is born to everything—to love, honor, wealth, and position—and spurns it all; when he takes a delight in wickedness, and goes the way of darkness and sin, he becomes a moral leper and a menace to society.

Where sin is born of no provocation, there is no call for mercy. This man has sinned for pleasure and for nothing else. My investigations have proven it without a doubt. It is my intention to see that he pays his debt to society, and that he pays in full.

Was there ever such vindictiveness? Not satisfied with all that he had done, the ruin he had wrought, the disgrace he had brought upon me, he was going to hang me. There never was a sin like his, a hatred so enduring.

My weakened body shivered, my spirit writhed in anguish; and my resentment at my fate rose and welled in a flood of fiery hatred. I clenched my hands and rolled about in helplessness. Why should it be! Why should it be! God help me!

Then I saw that I had a spectator. The jailer was leering through the grating; his face wreathed with a grin.

"Don't like it, hey?"

"Go away," I shouted, "go away."

"Not so brave as you were yesterday. I thought you would come to it after a while, you little runt."

With that he went on his way, leaving me to myself, the sound of his dying footsteps, and the gloating of his chuckle.

NEXT day my father came to see me, and along with him my mother. How different it was from our last meeting, when I was Witherspoon! From a prosecutor, a man who dealt out favors, who was loved and respected I had become—this. I was ashamed of my lowly plight and the quaking of my body. Would they ever understand? I sat upon my cot.

My father was the first to speak.

"Well," he said icily, "how do you feel this morning? Have you come to your senses yet?"

His face was cold and haggard, the light gone from his eyes. My mother sat beside me.

"I—I—what do you mean?" I asked, miserably.

"Why, that you make a clean breast of it, that you confess and ask for clemency. A son of mine must never die upon the gallows."

USE SPEEDWAY DE LUXE BLADES
FOR FAST, SMOOTH, ECONOMICAL SHAVES
TRADE MARK SPEEDWAY REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. THIN STEEL MADE IN U.S.A. INTERNATIONAL SAFETY RAZOR CORP. BLOOMFIELD, N. J.
4 FOR 10¢
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. SPEEDWAY MADE IN U.S.A.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What should I confess?"

"What? Why this. Did you not admit to me that you are guilty?"

"Never!"

For a moment he was puzzled, and he stepped closer to me, his eyes looking almost through me. For a wonder I met him fairly, my eyes were steady.

"You deny it?"

"Certainly. I never said a word."

Never have I seen so much abhorrence as came into his features.

"This is too much," he said, "too much altogether. When you confessed to me I thought at least you had one grain of honor left. You sin, you murder, and then you lie; there is nothing that you will not stoop to. To think that I am your father."

My mother pressed my arm.

"Father," she said, "please don't be angry. I am sure—"

"Listen," I said, "I am not guilty. I have nothing to confess, and have admitted nothing."

Then I told my tale.

When I finished my mother was weeping softly. "I knew it," she said; "I knew it."

My father was obdurate.

"This is the second time I have heard it," he scorned; "I would rather you hang than acknowledge myself a fool. I am through."

With that he left me. But my mother lingering, kissed me and bade me be of good cheer.

"I know you have told the truth, Walter. From the very first I knew it. I shall try to help you and I know that God will help us."

When I was alone I did some thinking. I could see the whole thing clearly. Even the jailer had been baited, the road to my destruction all prepared. While I had been going round as Witherspoon planning schemes of mercy he had been plotting for my downfall.

Even the scene upon the flagging when I lay upon the floor he had rehearsed before the jailer. I could see it all, the defiance, the taunts, the laughter, the calling himself Witherspoon. What finesse to his wickedness, building upon this torture for his victim to endure. And such hatred; there was no escape, he had even told my father.

CHAPTER XII

THE PASSING OF GEORGE WITHERSPOON

FOR weeks I lay in jail, subject to the taunts and the goading of my jailer, and to the gloom and despondency of a doom not to be avoided. The attorneys that we retained were pessimistic, and had no hope; the case was too conclusive. Against this prosecutor, they said, there was little chance. He was far too brilliant. So great had been his improvement, during the last six weeks, that there was but little likelihood of any case, whatever might be the evidence, going to acquittal. One and all they admired his genius, and feared him as an opponent. They could not stand against his eloquence, the quickness of his brain, and the nimbleness of his thinking.

Finally the case came up for trial and I was led into the court-room. The place was packed with people. As I was led along I was conscious of craning necks and a buzz of whispered comment. I could hear the words, "Warren, Warren; yes, that's the one, the little fellow." It was a scene I had witnessed many times without understanding. How well I understood it now. I was a felon branded; I who had always stood for honor.

My father and mother were there before me, and my attorneys, and sitting there above me the same old judge before whom I had tried so many cases. The surroundings were as usual, the atmosphere, the cold, quiet dignity of silence, and the feeling of apprehension and of pity, everything was in place.

No, not all. The one whom I wished to see, the prosecutor, had not come. My eyes ran around the courtroom; for days I had been looking for this moment, when I could look into his eyes, hoping against all dream of sense that I would find therein some dram of pity. How would he look, how act,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and would he dare to face me? That he was not there filled me with impatience. Why should he stay away?

Just then I heard a laugh out in the corridor, a laugh I had not heard for ages, a door opened and some men appeared smiling apparently at some joke or repartee just uttered, and holding the door for some one behind them. It was he.

He was tall and straight and stately, immaculate, no flick or fleck of dust upon him, well-tailored and in black, his hair brushed back from his temples and his lips smiling. Never was a man more handsome. For one short, fleeting moment he hesitated and looked about the courtroom; then he saw me.

I had hoped for pity. We met each other fairly, eyes and eyes for one brief instant; his twinkled with derision. His smile grew broader—a mockery beyond all telling, the fine subtle stabbing of a Satan. It was only a flash, no one in the room could see it; but I knew my case was hopeless; he would give no mercy.

With the first part of the trial I shall not bore you. A case of mere defense, of backing up and fighting against the wall. My attorneys were almost useless, in everything he beat them, there was no standing against his genius. The jury was almost of his choosing, he beat down my attorneys, made my case lopsided, had his way in all.

He could find a thousand ways, petty, subtle, and unseen to give me insult. When my mother wept he gloated in his subtle way so no one could see it. When my father frowned it made him happy. He put me up in many colors and in a horrid light so that everybody hated me. I was helpless, and grew despondent; I knew I was gone.

The trial was almost ended, in another day would come the pleas before the jury. Eager to hear the summing of the case a great crowd was in attendance. Through all the day the doors swung to and fro, as men passed through, eager, silent, and expectant. I knew just what they wanted, of their desire to see me punished; there was not one in all that crowd, who thought me guiltless.

It was cruel; but I was hardened; the sooner the end came the better.

To me the trial lost interest; it was too one-sided; the prosecutor had all the evidence, and my attorneys were almost powerless. Even the blood-stained knife with which the deed was done was there with "W" upon it. I grew diffident in my hopelessness, and to while away the time began to watch the crowd instead.

There were many people there of all conditions, faces of all kinds, men of all professions and trades, and of every age. Occasionally the door swung open and some one entered, timid and noiseless, paused a second, then glided to a seat. First I studied the crowds, in a vague uncertain way taking in the whole. Then by rows, and lastly I sized up and valued each individual for his standards, his mode of thinking, and his character.

ONE man in the whole lot attracted me, sitting in the back, silent and watchful by the door. He was clad in black, was of dark complexion, with straight firm features, and a strong chin. There was that about him which spoke of a profession; the refinement of his features told of education. He was listening most intently. When he looked at my attorneys his eyes were full of wonder, and, I thought, of some impatience. Occasionally he would look at Witherspoon; as he did so I noticed that he frowned and his face seemed clouded. There was something about the man that struck me. Did he understand? I watched him.

Suddenly he looked straight at me; he seemed to see clear through me, to read my very soul, and he smiled. I don't know why, but the first time since the trial commenced I picked up courage. I knew that something was going to happen, and in my favor.

Just then the door swung open. A figure entered, tall and somber, gray-headed, with a long, long beard. I started. It was —could it be? Yes, it was—it was he—the Master! He paused and came in gently, touched the other on the arm and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then went out. The other followed, I wondered.

But nothing happened. Shortly afterward the court adjourned and I was led back to my cell. Still I was hopeful and had confidence almost prophetic. The old man was not there for nothing, of that I was certain. Why had I not, in my extremity, called on him and told him of my trouble? He, and only he, could know what had really happened. Ever as he had recognized me when I was metamorphosed as Witherspoon, so would he have known my own true self. I picked up hope.

In the morning when I stepped into the courtroom, there was a surprise waiting. Clara Rohilla was there with her father. Best of all, she smiled; not a smile of pity, but a real, true smile such as she gave me back in the good old days gone by. Also, there was the Master, with his kindly face, his majesty, and his eyes that knew no evil. Beside him sat the man I had seen the day before; only he did not see me, being too busy with my attorneys and in watching the prosecutor. My mother seemed happy and my father almost kindly. The only person in the room embarrassed was George Witherspoon.

He, in truth, was fidgety and very nervous. Every one in the room could see it. When he was not watching the man in black, he was staring at the Master. Never before had I seen him waver, and I hardly believed it now. There could be but one explanation; he recognized them; knew just what they knew, and feared them. The old power, and the prescience that they held over him in the days gone by, was unabated.

What would he do?

The court opened with him fighting like a fury. Every move of my new counsel he met with a storm of protest. If he was in fear, he was far from cowardly, and struck with redoubled vigor. Never was there such wit before, nor rapidity of thinking. The air fairly scintillated with his genius; the room was held spellbound.

But he could not have his way. He had met his master. Against the cold, clear logic of my new-found friend he fought in vain. The evidence was in; the case was finished; they took it to the jury. The expectancy was tense, nor was it without good reason.

If you have ever heard good pleading, the fiery eloquence of a frantic lawyer, you will have some inkling of the scene that followed. He would have naught but hanging. The picture that he drew of me made even me shudder. My childhood, my bringing up, my opportunities, the disgrace I had brought upon my parents, my dissipation, my worthlessness, the treachery, the low, sinking hound skulking in the dark, preying in crime and murder, gorging myself with blood.

There was no crime I had not stooped to, no sin that I did not seek. There never was a man so worthless, a villain so abject. Even as the hyena is a thing of cowardice, striking in the dark, so was I a dastard among all sinners, slinking in the night.

The eyes of all were on me.

Then came my counsel. He was calm and cold and steady, his logic cutting like cold steel. He went into the evidence and tore the case wide open. He drew a picture of my childhood, and of my companion; each thing he put in place, piece by piece, as in a structure. Everything was bolted down and clinched with logic. Until he reached the knife.

"W," he emphasized it to them. "W. What does it stand for? Witherspoon. He drew a picture of the scene there in the park, the shooting and the stabbing, of a man that's wounded unto death and dying in his slayer's arms. He brought the case clean down to the present time, and let them see it.

Then he taught us rhetoric, and diction, and the flow of speech, and did some wondrous talking. There was not a man in all the room who did not feel himself conspiring. They were about to murder justice and make a travesty of law. Would they hang a man that was guiltless? They could not! They dare not! There was one thing--acquittal.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AGAINST this reason George Witherspoon struck, fought with all his fury, flinging into the frenzy of his genius the venom of his hatred. Hang, hang, hang, he told them. Take this man, this villain, and give him his just due. I shuddered.

The jury filed out and the case was over. We waited. I am afraid my face was white, and I was full of fear. The Master came over to me.

"Never fear, my boy, it will all come right. It is going to be acquittal."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I know."

Just then the jury came in and announced that they had reached a verdict. His honor called the court. It was acquittal.

Congratulations followed; the weeping of my mother, the tears of Clara, and the thankfulness of my father. Then we all went home, and along with us the Master, the attorney, and the judge and Clara Rohilla. We all sat down to supper.

When it was over, the Master told his story. How he had come to the trial, recognized at once what had happened, sent for the attorney—the one man in the country whose genius, even in the old days, surtopped George Witherspoon—acquainted my father and sweetheart of the facts, and saved me. Just as he had finished a servant brought a paper. On the front page were the words: "Witherspoon Arrested."

Then followed the account of the case against him, new evidence, and his being led to the prison.

A few minutes later the door-bell rang and a message was delivered. It read:

> To WALTER WARREN, Mr. and Mrs WARREN, the MASTER and all others who wish to come:
>
> You are invited to see George Witherspoon in jail. He has a most surprising communication to give you. If you are interested, come at once.
>
> GEORGE WITHERSPOON.

We looked at each other in wonder. What was he up to now? My father was distrustful. My mother and Clara began to cry. "'Don't go," they sobbed; "don't go!"

The Master raised his hand.

"Listen," he said; "there is no danger. Perhaps there is something that we can learn. We must brave everything for wisdom.

"The danger, I think, is over. From what I know of these characters, once they break down and have passed the point of zenith, their fall is rapid. Undoubtedly he wishes to make a statement. And it may be interesting to hear just what he has to say."

A half-hour later we were at the jail. Our rating and our standing got us quick admittance. Even the jailer, Simpson, was quite courteous, though I could not help feeling that his eyes were on me, and that they were full of wonder.

After a little formality, we were led back through the corridor toward the cell of the accused, Simpson leading, the Master and I following, and the others coming after. I was not a little flustered and more than a bit afraid; I thought I had good reason. At length the jailer stopped. Before a cell he stood still and staring. His white face looked at us and then back at the cell. We all rushed up in wonder. The place was empty.

In a moment more the door opened; it had to be unlocked; and we had entered. There was no sign, no vestige—he had gone. How, when, or where, we could not make out. Ah, what was this?

Pinned to the bed was a sheet of paper. The Master picked it up. It read:

> To WALTER WARREN, the MASTER, and all others:
>
> Greetings. And a last farewell.
>
> THE REBEL SOUL.

And that was all. He was never heard of after. How he got out, no one ever knew; he left no sign behind him. He was gone forever—the Rebel Soul.

A long story entitled "Into the Infinite" by Austin Hall, follows "The Rebel Soul," with the same characters. It is considered one of the finest science-fiction-weird stories ever written.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Readers of both weird stories and science-fiction have a thriller coming to them in

THE BLIND SPOT

By Austin Hall & Homer Eon Flint

A great scientific novel of the occult

In a certain room in the dingy unoccupied house at 288 Chatterton Place in San Francisco, a strange and sinister drama unfolds; people enter but never come out.

Every terrifying and baffling disappearance, following fast upon attempts to solve the mystery, proves that the place is a gateway of some kind. ***But where did it lead?*** Into a shadow world peopled by fantoms of reality? In a duplicate of our own world? **Or into the realm of Death?**

And what was the connection between Professor Holcomb, who had just announced that he had pierced beyond the ***"veil"***, and the mysterious stranger hurrying to meet him?

The story is a thriller, the supreme accomplishment of two writers, each in his own right a master, one of the weird, the other of interplanetary science-fiction.

On sale complete in one issue of

Fantastic Novels

July issue on sale NOW

20 CENTS PER COPY

If your dealer is sold out send 20¢ to 280 Broadway, Dept. F, and receive a copy by mail

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Editors' Page

IF LETTERS, phone calls and other means of communication may be used as a measuring rod, then there is *every* indication that our readers are well pleased with the new policy of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, and the companion magazine, FANTASTIC NOVELS, which latter was created to accommodate the very long stories in the fantastic field.

Some of the many letters are published in the Readers' Viewpoint in this issue, and there are a few questions in these letters that should be answered.

For instance, there's the matter of short stories. There are many top-notch short stories, weird, fantastic-adventure, science-fiction, and interplanetary, still to be published. One of two of these will be used in each issue of both magazines, as space permits. The same applies to the best of the novelets, such as Philip M. Fisher's "Fungus Isle", Will McMorrow's "Venus or Earth?", etc.

New stories by modern writers are given careful consideration and when we get one that deserves the spot, we shall be very happy to publish it. Also, a treat is awaiting you soon in the appearance of classics like "The Dragon Glass" and "The People of the Pit" by A. Merritt.

The question of "when will you publish the 'Atom' sequel by Cummings?" has been answered at last, thanks to our new arrangements. It will appear in the September issue of FANTASTIC NOVELS, on sale July 10.

Planned for the next issue of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, October, on sale August 7, is "The Face in the Abyss" by A. Merritt. This is the forerunner of the other famous, longer story, "The Snake Mother." Every story will be selected from those demanded by the majority of our readers.

We have carefully noted comments concerning cover pictures, bulletins, full page illustrations, etc.; these will be taken into consideration in shaping the future of the companion magazines.

The various sequels to be printed in the future are complete stories in themselves. If you missed the first novelet, "The Girl in the Golden Atom" in F.F.M., for instance, "The People of the Golden Atom" will in no way be spoiled for you. Some of these stories and their sequels were originally published as independent items, sometimes a year or so apart.

In the March issue of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES there was a list of story ratings by the readers between the Sept.-Oct. issue and the March. Here is the rating of the issues from March through the May-June:

March

The Blind Spot, The Conquest of the Moon Pool, The Planet Juggler, Bomb from Beranga, A Place of Monsters, The Belated Tears of Louis Marcel.

April

The Blind Spot, The Conquest of the Moon Pool, The Devil of the Western Sea, The Beast Plants, Fire Gas.

May-June

The Blind Spot, Three Lines of Old French, Finis, Pegasus, Sunken Cities, A World of Indexed Numbers, Raiders of the Air.

—*The Editors*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Half-Past Twelve In Eternity

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

THE man walking along the road stopped suddenly. "Hello!" he said aloud. "What the dickens!" He stared about him in bewildered fashion as he took in his surroundings—the tree-lined road which rolled in front of him, the neat little suburban houses, the distant prospects of the hills.

"It's funny. Here I am on the way to John's," he mused; "and yet, darn it all, I never thought it possible I could get on a train, get off it, and start walking without any recollection of it. What on earth could I have been thinking of? That's what the human brain can do. I've been working too hard. Maybe I'd best lay off a bit."

He sat down on a low stone wall and began to laugh softly.

"Certainly is the craziest business. I remember leaving the office. Old Welsh was still playing with his books. I believe he's sorry when twelve o'clock comes Saturday and he can't juggle figures till Monday morning again. I came down and went back up again to get some papers. It was snowing, and I tried to get on a bus. The thing was full, so I stood aside, and then another one came up, and I stepped out and slipped. It's a wonder the bus didn't go over me."

He got up. "Oh, what's the use? I was worrying about that Sprague case, and forgot what I was doing. Only thing I can't understand is—where's the snow? And it's warm here—warm as a summer day. Must be getting on."

Fumbling in his pocket, he pulled out his watch.

"Just like the old timpiece. Stopped. Half past twelve—just after I left the office. Here's an automobile coming. Say, what's the time, old man?"

The automobile sped past, its driver staring ahead of him.

"Well, I'll be— Struck a deaf one."

Grumbling, he walked on a little farther, then turned swiftly as he heard the approach of another car.

Stepping a little to one side, he held up his hand.

"I'll get it from this bird," he told himself grimly.

As the car came up, with a thin-faced man in goggles at the wheel, the man on the road let out a shout.

"What's the time, brother?"

IT SEEMED to him that for a moment the man at the wheel gave a start, then without other sign of having heard the query, stepped on the gas so that the car leaped forward, just grazing the indignant pedestrian.

"What's the idea? Want to kill me?" the latter shouted, shaking his fist at the cloud of dust. "People have no time to be civil to you nowadays. Well, I don't suppose it matters. I'll walk in on John and give him a surprise. I hope to heavens he hasn't gone off to the links."

As he neared the trim house with its patch of lawn, a small boy on a scooter shot toward him.

"Got an alarm clock, son?" he asked whimsically. "If you have, maybe you can tell what time it is. My watch has stopped work for the day."

The boy put one foot down sharply on the road and checked his progress with a startled look; then as if remembering some injunction pulled out an old watch at-

Copyright 1924 by The Frank A. Munsey Company

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tached to a string, looked at it, then slung it back into his pocket with a twirl of the wrist, and, without a word, wheeled the scooter round. Shoving off with his active foot, he was almost out of earshot before William Hopkins found words.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" he growled. "What's wrong with the people here? I never met such a bunch of close-mouths. Might as well be a foreign country for all the answer they'll give you. Even the kids are dumb as oysters. How can John stand them? If I lived here I'd go crazy in a week. Why, the people in the suburbs don't know they're alive."

He walked up the concrete path, and was about to put his hand up to the shining brass knocker when he noticed the French window of the living room was open. He stepped to it and looked inside.

"Hello, John!" he cried cheerfully; and the man inside standing by the heavy table turned slowly and smiled.

With a step he was at the window, holding out his hand.

"Bill! This is great! I had a hunch you might come out today. Come in, man."

William Hopkins shook his friend's hand warmly and stepped in over the low sill. "Just took it into my head to run out and see you. I haven't been here for a coon's age, John. But I said to myself, certainly must look up the boy; and here I am. Say, I'm sure glad to see you, John."

"Same here. It's been quite a time since we saw each other, Bill. You're looking much the same."

"Can't complain. I feel as young as I ever did, and I don't see you've changed any these past two years."

"No," John smiled with a faintly amused twinkle in his eyes; "I guess I'm pretty much now as I always look. But how are things with you?"

"Pretty good—pretty good, John. Plugging along in the same old way."

"Same old way, eh?" John echoed.

"Of course. That seems to tickle you. How's business?"

"Business?" said John with an air of surprise. "I thought you knew I retired some time ago."

"News to me, John. You don't say! Lucky dog—nothing to do but cut your coupons, and golf every day in the week if you want to. Well, well, you do surprise me. You were always such an active cuss."

"Oh, I'm not idle. I try to help the other fellow along a bit."

"Charity, eh?"

"Well, no. I don't like the word, Bill. I mean just doing what I can, in a friendly way, for any one that needs boosting."

"Well, I never thought you'd quit."

"Got to make room for the young ones."

"Young ones! That's a good one, John. Why, let me see—you're only thirty-eight, aren't you? And you look like thirty. Where do you get this old age stuff? I can't say I feel a day older."

"No, I don't suppose you do, Bill. It's a wonderful sensation."

"You bet it is. By George, last time I saw you, you were a pretty sick man, though John. I never thought you'd win through but you certainly cheated the doctors. You had them scared, and me, too. I tell you when I left you lying there to go back to town, I thought it was good-by, forever. But it just proves you can't kill a good man. You're good for a century yet."

"Why not for eternity? Might as well say that," replied John, still with the same faint smile.

"Eh—what's that?" William Hopkins threw back his head and let out a bellow of laughter. "Of course. Why not, the way science is progressing? Live forever, eh? That's the motto. Well, well, you certainly are the same merry old cuss, and it does me a world of good to see you. Don't know why, but I felt kind of blue coming along. No reason—kind of off color, you know. Too much work in the office. Or maybe it was your crazy people round here. What's got into them? You ask them a civil question, and you might as well be speaking to the air. Never a word out of them."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"They didn't hear you, of course."

"Aw, what's wrong with them? All got ear trouble? I speak loud enough for them to hear, don't I?"

"Yes, I can hear you."

"Well, what's the trouble, John?"

"They didn't see you."

"Didn't see me? Great heavens! I stood right in front of one bird with a buzz wagon, and flagged him to ask what time it was, and he shot past me like I was a wooden sign post."

"Oh, you'll get used to things like that. You'll learn not to worry about trifles."

"TRIFLES! And see here, what kind of kids have you got here? I asked a kid on a scooter what the time was—my watch had stopped—and what does he do but shoot off without a peep out of his chest. I tell you, if a foreigner was dumped down here he'd think he'd struck a bunch of dummies or lunatics. Well, maybe not that, but people that hadn't an ounce of manners. This would be a gold mine for a salesman with the Book of Etiquette. Oh, excuse me—I didn't hear your friend come in."

He stopped awkwardly as a middle-aged man in a tweed suit sauntered into the room, went to the table, and, taking a cigar from the humidor on it, lit it carefully, looked at the match, then, going to the window, threw out the match end and stood looking out into the garden.

"Who's your loquacious friend?" asked Hopkins in a stage whisper.

"Oh, he lives here," answered John in his natural tone.

"Oh, he does?" A puzzled expression flickered across Hopkins' face. "Don't appear to bother his head very much about us."

"No."

"Deaf, like the rest of the neighbors?"

"You needn't whisper, old man; he can't hear us."

"Another of them. I'd think you'd be scared to live here."

"Nothing scares me now."

"No! I guess you're used to it, but I don't quite get the hang of things. You mean this fellow lives in your house?"

"Yes."

"Does he always act like this—as if he didn't notice anything or anybody? He is not blind as well as deaf, is he?"

"No, indeed."

"Well, who is he? He certainly acts like he owned the house."

"He does."

"What! For the love of Pete, how long has he been here, John?"

"Two years."

"And he lets you stay on? What's the big idea? I don't get it."

"He doesn't know I'm here," answered John easily.

"Say, what's the matter with me? He lives here, and don't know you're here? Why not? Am I crazy, or what's the matter?"

John came forward and laid his hand on his friend's arm.

"Don't you know yet, Bill?"

"Know what?"

"Know that I'm what those who don't know all call dead! I died two years ago."

"Dead!" William Hopkins stared incredulously, then shrank away with an inarticulate murmur. "You—oh, my God—now I remember. But—"

The other held him firmly as he added with a smile, radiant with affection:

"Don't be frightened, Bill. Everything's all right. You are dead too, old man. Run over by a bus three months ago, and you've just managed to come back to your old friends. It's all right, Bill, absolutely all right."

Coming in the October issue—on sale August 7

The Face in the Abyss

By A. MERRITT

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to The Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, 280 Broadway, N. Y.

New Policy Okay

Dear Editor:

The announcement of the new FANTASTIC NOVELS magazine and the change in story policy of F.F.M. came as a complete surprise, although it was evident some change was pending. You are to be congratulated on the solution you have worked out for the problem of the full length stories which are after all the real classics of fantasy fiction.

I sincerely trust that your new story policy works out so well that you will be justified in putting at least one, or better yet, both of the new magazines to a monthly basis.

Several of your readers are engaged in a debate over whether you should print the stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs when most of his works are available in book form. However, not quite all the Burroughs' works are in book form. Two of his earliest stories, "The Girl from Farris's" and "The Efficiency Expert", never appeared in book form and present day Burroughs fans have never had a chance to read them. These are more adventure than fantasy, but isn't there a Munsey magazine somewhere suitable to reprint them in?

For the other Burroughs books, I agree with Mr. Wasso, let's use the space for the authors whose works are out-of-print. This has nothing to do with Burroughs' merits, as I personally rank him as fantasy's No. 1 writer and own a copy of every one of his published books.

No doubt you will receive a wave of protest from F.F.M. readers for reverting to rough edges. So let me be one to report the magazine is just as attractive as ever, the main thing being the contents.

CHARLES W. WOLFE.

417 Tenth St.,
LAS VEGAS, N. M.

Welcoming Fantastic Novels

My heartiest congratulations on the new set-up. FANTASTIC NOVELS will indeed be welcome as it will solve the serial problem quite completely.

A few suggestions, however. I sincerely believe that FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES should continue as a monthly with the new magazine taking the brunt of the long novels bi-monthly. FAMOUS FANTASTIC could then, as you've planned, take care of the short stories and shorter novels either complete in one issue or in two part serials since a month would not be too long a wait to finish a story. Then if the time should ever come when you run short of reprint material, which is unlikely, you could discontinue the bi-monthly and publish only F.F.M.

Maybe I am asking too much after so much has been given. I hope not. Anyway here is an optimistic picture of the future that I hope to see.

(1) F.F.M. again a monthly with FANTASTIC NOVELS a bi-monthly. (2) Both magazines to have smooth edges. (3) Full page illustrations by Paul or Finlay for each story and several for the longer stories. (4) Covers by Paul emphasizing weird scenes and scientific effects rather than the "feminine form divine". (5) Continuation of the splendid "personal contact" between the editor and the readers.

CARL MAINFORT.

Box 265,
ALEXANDRIA, VA.

Rating March Issue

Here are my usual ratings (complete items).

1. "A Place of Monsters." The best complete story in the issue. More of this type. Reminiscent of "The Whimpus."

2. "Bomb from Beranga." Honestly, I didn't think you could get such grade-A stories. More power to you and I shan't complain of any new material as long as it is of the calibre of this and "Son of the Stars" (by the way a friend of mine brought to my attention certain flaws in this story. Namely that our hero should have brains enough to test the atmosphere of this strange planet before stepping out of his spaceship and the other the remote possibility that Dave and the girl would be able to have children.) "B from B" is rather too short, though. I would appreciate a sequel wherein the two return and recount their adventures.

3. "The Planet Juggler." Very good although the worst complete novelette you have printed (worst isn't exactly fitting since none have been below B!). Reminded me of Manning's "Living Galaxy" which was printed in '34. Perhaps he got his idea from the juggler. Rather weak ending—"thank you, good-bye!"

To my mind there is one very noticeable mistake in this story. It concerns Canopus. Frederick states that it is a star (p. 59 . . . "Canopus . . . one star of that name." p. 63 . . . "Canopus

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was undoubtedly in the same gaseous state".) which it is—but that it has intelligent life. All right—same as Achernar. But . . . note the following excerpts:

a) p. 65 . . . "light from Canopus was perceptible . . . basked in the influence of . . . Canopus" . . .

b) p. 67 . . (Elverson speaking to an inhabitant of Canopus) "someone on your *planet*" . . .

c) p. 68 . . . "mammoth gaseous explosion (from Canopus) and . . . sheets of flames arising from the aura" . . .

d) p. 68 . . . "he (Canopus) lives . . . on a far distant *island* . . . the city (on the island) is surrounded by a *wall*" . . .

Now a and c certainly refer to a sun and b and d to a planet. Frederick undoubtedly meant that Canopus lived on a planet of the sun Canopus. But he didn't even so much as hint at that fact.

4. "The Belated Tears of Louis Marcel"—good. More of this type. Now for the illustrations:

Finlay scores again as I knew he would, if he were again let loose at those full-page illustrations.

Second place honors are carried off by Mr. Paul for his two excellent drawings for "The Planet Juggler."

And, of course, the cover. Very good—what there was of it. I still hope you will get a full cover with the titles of the stories either in a strip at the top or a strip at the bottom. After all, you can look at the contents page if you want to know all the stories.

POINTED QUESTION: When are you going to print the sequel to that superb story, "The Girl in the Golden Atom"?*

Glad to see you're a member of the Queens SFL, the biggest and best of them all.

Editor's page necessary improvement—was surprised to see the low rating of "Son of the Stars," though.

Rating of serials will be taken up in separate letters.

SYLVESTER BROWN, JR.

7 Arlington St.,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

---

* *"The People of the Golden Atom" scheduled for* FANTASTIC NOVELS, *September issue, on sale July 10.*

More from Mr. Brown

Boy, you're certainly doing an effective job of spring cleaning. I'm glad you've adopted this new policy of publishing only complete stories. Then we can have all the long novels in one piece.

Now to the present F.F.M. First the letters. They were all right, but what impressed me was *5 solid pages*. Oh, happy, *happy*, day! I have waited a millenium to see it. Thank you "too" much!

As usual VF caps first prize with the illustrating. I thought his ill. For C of MP-VI was his tops, but if anything could beat it, it was his for TBS-III. How does the man do it? Second honors go to Paul for his ill. of Sunken Cities; one of his best. Stick to the dot work, Virgil!

This was a banner issue as far as story material was concerned. "Finis"—superb; absolutely the best short story you have printed; science and human interest were combined together with description in the best manner for a short story that I have ever read in my life—no foolin'!

"Three Lines of Old French"—truly a masterpiece.

"Sunken Cities"—This, like "The Whimpus," is the kind of a story I go for. More like this, please. Is there a sequel?

"A World of Indexed Numbers"—excellent; the planes sounded something like those in the 1916 illustration.

"Pegasus"—Good, but not as good as the other new stories.

"Raiders of the Air"—OK for a filler.

So you can see that the stories were rather exceptional this time.

The Editor's page—A necessity and good as usual.

I like the little tidbits of information that you put in. I hope you will be able to make both F.F.M. and F.N. into monthlies—did you forecast that when you answered Carl Mainfort's letter by saying you may be able to double the output later? I hope so.

The picture done in 1916 of what the world of 2416 might look like is certainly very interesting although I don't for the life of me see how those enormous planes could even get up off the platforms!

The cover: still too much advertising. Perhaps you can solve the problem by using a different title cut—not a different title but a different title cut—and putting a strip along the bottom for the stories. The cover itself was good although there were fallacies in it: the drawing was more of an ordinary octopus rather than a true squid; the girl and man should be on the housetop rather than on the boat; the mast should be broken, or at least I gathered that from the story.

The biography of A. Merritt is very interestingly told. Oh, that he would finish his three stories. I guess we'd all like the kind of an island he owns—as least I would.

Both poems were good.

Well, I guess that's all for this month. Be seeing you.

Sincerely,
SYLVESTER BROWN, JR.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To a New-born Mag

So F.F.M. has a new sister! I realize, FANTASTIC NOVELS, that most of the offspring of your parents, the F.A.M. Company, have little fear of obstacles in the path of future success. Take your now illustrious sister F.F.M. as an encouraging instance. Her few faults are overwhelmingly smothered by her more charming aspects that need not be mentioned.

I hope that you, too, will carry a reader's department around you, for that truly adds to a young magazine's magnetism. You also need a lovely face. That and all interior beautifications can easily be supplied by such artists as my beloved make-believe friends, Virgil Finlay and Paul. As any young mag knows, messy, superfluous printing on the face spoils the general make-up, and full page illustrations are the best thing to have to satisfy avid admirers.

I will end this little pep-note with the very sincere wish for your success, but with the success of your sister-mag F.F.M. to use as a goal, you are sure to meet all of the ambitious expectations of your family and friends. My only regret is that you, too, will have only six birthdays a year. But possibly in the near future this annoyance may be remedied to the happiness of all.

Your dear friend and interested admirer,
CHARLES HIDLEY.

Apt. E. 5
2541 Aqueduct Ave.,
NEW YORK CITY

Carloads of Thanks

Ever since the first appearance of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES my enthusiasm has grown greater and greater until now it has "run over." This letter is the result.

Carloads of thanks for fixing things so that we fantasy fiends can now get the long classics in complete form. I am sure that all fans relish the prospect of getting "The Blind Spot" and "Darkness and Dawn" in complete form. I for one can hardly wait! Long live F.F.M. and its new companion, FANTASTIC NOVELS!

I am glad that F.F.M. now has illustrated covers. Although I like Finlay best I realize that there are many Paul fans. Therefore please alternate Finlay and Paul on cover illustrations.

Concerning illustrations, I wonder what the readers thought of Finlay's illustrations of the Nervina for "The Blind Spot" on page 35 of the April issue. This woman was described as exceptionally beautiful and the illustration really lived up to the description. In fact all of Finlay's drawings have been excellent.

The May-June issue of F.F.M. rates orchids. Thanks for enlarging the Readers' Viewpoint section. I hope it will be permanent. The story "The Blind Spot" is the most unique and strange mystery story that I've had the pleasure to read. "Three Lines of Old French" is a beautiful story, ranking just about top in fantasy novelets. Also the other stories were well worth reading though not in the select outstanding class. However "Finis" was quite impressive.

A short debate on the story "Finis" is now in order. I believe the story is built on a fallacy. The author seems to think that just because there is light there is heat! Remember the star has not moved nearer to the Solar System. All that has occurred is that at long last the giant star's light has reached us and thus made it visible. We can see the light from Antares and many other large and hot stars but we feel no heat from them. Also would heat waves move through the cold of outer space for thousands of light years at the speed of light which exceeds 186,000 miles per second?

I thought it wise to mention the scientific inaccuracy of "Finis" as many poorly informed people might get foolish ideas about the universe. Even today I'll bet there are great numbers of people who think that Venus and Mars are stars like the North Star and Antares or who if asked how large they think a star is, will inform you that they are quite large, in fact as large as a big house!

DAN WADE.

5127 Farrar St.,
SEATTLE, WASH.

Paging "Panurge"

Will the chap calling himself "Panurge" who gave no address, in Viewpoints, please do me the favor of getting in touch with me at the below address? Living as we do in the same city, we two should certainly get together on such matters of common interest as Science-fiction. So, if the gentleman in question will please write, I'm sure that we will find a great deal of interest to us both. How about it, Panurge? I am looking forward to hearing from you.

JOSEPH GILBERT.

3805½ Park St.,
COLUMBIA, S. C.

Comparing Old and New

Thank you ever so much for printing Merritt's "Three Lines of Old French." This beautiful fantasy deserves all the praise it has received in the past. I had never read it before, so I am doubly grateful.

In contrast to the stories of the April issue, everyone of which I had previously read, all the tales in this number are new to me, except "The Blind Spot." I enjoyed the whole issue.

"Pegasus" is the first non-scientific fantasy by Kuttner which I have read, although I am, of course, familiar with his science-fiction. This short is quite at home in its select company of old classics

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the other extreme in time, Pollock's "Finis" (first published about the time I started to walk), also impressed me very favorably.

I think the new plan of publishing long stories complete in F.F.M. and its new companion, FANTASTIC NOVELS, will be very favorably accepted. I hope, however, that this does not mean the complete elimination of such fine shorts as "Finis" and "World of Indexed Numbers."* I agree with the majority that, in general, the longer stories are the best.

Finlay's illustration for "The Blind Spot," showing the faces in the ring, is *marvelous*, no less. It alone is worth the price of the magazine, many times over.

I'm looking forward to "Darkness and Dawn," which I have never read.

Sincerely,

D. B. THOMPSON.

3136 Q St.,
LINCOLN, NEBR.

---

* *There will be room for one or two short stories in most issues of both magazines.*

Survey of F.F.M.

Ranking the stories of the Feb., Mar., and Apr. issues: Best: Merritt, Hall and Flint, Farley, Fisher, Rich, Stilson. Good: Frederick, Byron, Sheehan, Grover, Walton, Davis. Fair: Coblentz, Binder, Withrow. Poor: None.

Reprint: Merritt—Metal Monster, Through the Dragon Glass, etc.; England—Darkness and Dawn, etc.; Stilson—Polaris of the Snow, etc.; Giesy—Palos of the Dog-Star Pack, etc.; Hall, Flint, Garrett Smith, Fisher, Serviss, Farley.

Please either reprint your short stories from the older ARGOSIES or eliminate them entirely, giving us one more novelette. We can get enough of the modern shorts; it is the old classics which we want.

W. H. E.

SALEM, ORE.

About Larry and Lakla

I've never read "The Moon Pool"—that is, until you reprinted it. And through close to 15 years of stf. and fantasy reading I wondered just what was so marvelous about a tale as to invoke only the greatest and most ardent praise from readers. Now I know, and all the great novels, both stf. and fantasy, that I've ever read fade in a rather murky and dull oblivion.

There's really no way to describe aptly, "The Moon Pool." At times I seemed to think that Merritt was attempting something much too vast for him; and then again I thought that Merritt had succeeded in writing something that no other author ever could or even attempt to do. How can I ever forget—the Shining One—Yolara—The Dweller—Lakla and the glorious Silent Ones—Thanks, "Mysteries"—thanks for a most wonderful and invaluable work.

Your magazine speaks for itself. Neat and trim in format; top-notch artists in Paul and Finlay. You can't really compare Paul and Finlay. Their works are so different. Finlay is superb for scenes eerie and fantastic; in picturing characters as they are. But Paul is more than his match in depicting strange machinery and creatures. So they are both essential to your type of magazine—and both undisputed leaders in their line.

Keep up the swell work and the best of stuff and things to you.

JOSEPH M. ARCIER.

423 E. Main St.,
WATERBURY, CONN.

"Lord of Death" Best

This is not my first letter to a magazine. It is my second one. My first letter was for a contest and never saw print. You are not sponsoring a contest, but nevertheless I am writing. So you see, you must have something. I also am one of your youngest readers. Quite an accomplishment, don't you think? Also, this is the only magazine that I save. I will now imitate the older readers and comment on the stories.

Number one on my Hit Parade is "The Lord of Death" by Homer Eon Flint. I will long remember it.

Number two is the "Radio Man" by Ralph Milne Farley. How about the sequels to it?

Number three, "The Diminishing Draft," by Kaempffert. I would like to see more of this author.

Number four, "The Girl in the Golden Atom," by Cummings. Sequels, please.

Number five, "The Devil of the Western Sea," by Philip M. Fisher, O. K. Amusing.

Number six, "The Planet Juggler," by Frederick. One of those super-science stories. Not too many of these.

Number seven, "Who Is Charles Avison?" by Marshall. I don't know who he is but it was interesting reading.

Number eight, "The Moon Pool," and "Conquest of the Moon Pool," by Merritt. They are eighth because they go together. CMP would have ranked higher only my judgment of the story was spoiled by its length. Six months is a long time.

Number nine, "Karpen the Jew," by Leath. Truly strange.

Number ten, "Blind Man's Buff," and "The Gravity Experiment," by Giesy, Ha, ha, ho, ho. Need I say more?

My "Miss" Parade is very small and in no definite order. "Fruit of the Forbidden Tree, Lights, Beast Plants, Kiss of Death, Belated Tears of Louis Marcel, A Place of Monsters, and last, Behind the Curtain." Not very big, is it? The other stories are average

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Blind Spot" is swell. If it ends as well as it begins I'll be satisfied. The [illegible] stories are all right but none of them are classics.

Finlay's illustrations are wonderful. I liked the one for part 2 of "The Blind Spot" best.

MATTHEW HARLIB.

2942 W. 17th St.,
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Completed Stories Welcomed

First a little raving about artist Virgil Finlay. He is the best professional artist any magazine ever had. Look at his drawing for "The Blind Spot" in the May-June issue! Have him do many more covers, but first reduce the size of the title of the mag.

Paul is good, too, but don't have just Finlay-Paul illustrations. Have a variety of good artists. May I suggest J. Allan St. John? He is excellent at action pictures such as the cover for this last issue of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES by Frank R. Paul.

As for the stories in order of merit:

(1) "Three Lines of Old French" by A. Merritt I like that kind of story and you can depend on Merritt for a good story any time.

(2) "Pegasus" by Henry Kuttner. The idea of printing one new story in a reprint mag is all right, but unless they are *really worth printing* don't print them at all in F.F.M.

(3) "Finis" by Frank L. Pollock. Haven't I heard of the end of the world before? This seems to be a new way of ending it, and entirely unbelievable. I still liked it.

(4) "A World of Indexed Numbers" by Will McMorrow.

(5) "Sunken Cities" by Douglas Newton.

(6) "Raiders of the Air" by H. Kelley and F. T. Barton. The story is just plain N. G. (no good), I'm sure you have a lot of good material to pick from, so please don't print anything that has absolutely nothing to it.

It's hard to tell what story I liked best in F.F.M. so far, but "The Moon Pool" is a beautiful masterpiece.

Am I glad that you are putting out two magazines instead of one, one being for complete long novels and one for shorter stories! I can hardly wait to read "The Blind Spot"! My only grudge is that both should be bi-monthlies.

One John Wasso, Jr., said in a letter to F.F.M that he hoped that it would become the most popular magazine on the market. As far as I'm concerned, it is!

WALTER C. CONOVER.

Hambrooks Blvd.,
CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND

General Comments

I have delayed writing this letter for some time in order to be better able to criticize your magazine more fully. I must say that you have improved the make-up and appearance of the magazine one hundred per cent over the first issue. In Finlay and Paul you have two of the finest artists doing this type of illustration. As an addition to these two may I suggest Hannes Bok, who does a type of illustration similar to that of Finlay?

I hope you do not crowd out a number of short classics such as, "Through the Dragon Glass," "Spawn of the Comet," etc., with stories by new writers.

The classics you have published stand, on the whole, far above the stories being published in the other science fiction magazines.

The following is a list of outstanding stories that you should print as soon as possible, especially those by England, Giesy, Stilson and Merritt, as you have had numerous requests for their works.

Otis Adelbert Kline's "Maza of the Moon"—"Spawn of the Comet."

Merritt's "The Snake Mother"—"The Ship of Ishtar"—"Metal Monster"—"Face in the Abyss"—"People of the Pit"—"The Dwellers in the Mirage."

Stilson's "Polaris of the Snows"—"Minos of Sardanes"—"Polaris and the Goddess Glorian."

Cumming's "Brave New World"—"The Fire People."

Giesy's "Palos of the Dog Star Pack"—"Mouthpiece of Zitu"—"Jason, Son of Jason."

England's "Empire of the Air"—"Beyond the Great Oblivion"—"The Afterglow"—"The Fatal Gift"—"The Golden Blight"—"Darkness and Dawn."

Farley's "The Radio Beasts"—"The Radio Planet."

Serviss' "Moon Maiden"—"Conquest of Mars"—"Conquest of the Moon."

H. E. Flint's "The Planeteer"—"Queen of Life"—"Man in the Moon"—"Out of the Moon."

Garret Smith's "After a Million Years"—"Treasures of Tantalus."

Coblentz's "The Blue Barbarians"—"The Sunken World."

The best two stories you have published so far are, "The Lord of Death" and "The Moon Pool."

RUSSELL COX.

RR. No. 3,
TERRE HAUTE, IND.

British Admirer

Owing to the spot of bother over here, I have only been able to obtain three issues of your wonderful magazine, but what issues. The stories I liked best were: The Moon Pool, The Whimpus. The Girl in the Golden Atom, Bomb

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Beranga, and Devil of the Western Sea.

I hope you will continue to give us the classics that have been asked for most. Here are some of them: All by A. Merritt; "The Fatal Gift," "The Golden Blight," "The After-Glow," "Darkness and Dawn," "Into the Great Oblivion," by Geo. Allan England; "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," "The Mouthpiece of Zitu," "Jason, Son of Jason," by J. U. Giesy; "Messiah of the Cylinder," "The Draft of Eternity," "The Sea Demons," "The Eye of Balamok," by Victor Rousseau; "After a Million-Years," "Treasures of Tantalus," "Cloud Hawk," by Garrett Smith; "Out of the Moon," "The Planeteer," "King of Conserve Island," by Homer Eon Flint; "The Rebel Soul," "Into the Infinite," by Austin Hall; "Explorers of Infinity," "Tarrano the Conqueror," by Ray Cummings.

These have been asked for most during the last ten years and represent the cream of classic science-fiction. Ignore requests to reprint the Coblentz novels such as "The Blue Barbarians," "The Sunken World," etc., as these have been read by most fans, and in any case are still obtainable; this goes for stories by Burroughs, Taine, Keller, Wells, Williamson, Leinster, Lovecraft, Verne, and Poe.

Please never let go of Finlay, he is superb. Print as many serials as you like and continue to use new short stories like "Bomb from Beranga."

I hope you will maintain your present high standard of stories and illustrations.

ARNOLD WOOD.

12 Canill Grove East, Levenshulme,
MANCHESTER 19, ENGLAND.

Letter Dated Mar. 25

I might just as well begin at the beginning, so it's off to my files of F.F.M. I go. To start with the first issue, you had entirely too many new stories. For example, "Space Station No. 1"—1936; "Karpen the Jew"—1938. "Witch-Makers"—1936. I've noticed the later tendency in your magazine has been toward better known and of course, older stories. In the first issue, Merritt's "Moon Pool" took first place with me, with Cummings' "Girl in the Golden Atom" second. In the second issue, the quality of experimentation was not quite so predominant. In this issue the incomparable "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" was begun. The other predominant story in this issue is, of course, "The Moon Metal." In the third you became definitely settled. Nothing after 1924 was presented in this issue, much to my delight. "The Radio Man" was undoubtedly the finest Farley ever wrote. Incidentally when will you have the rest of the trilogy? I would rather have them than the "Blind Spot" or even "Darkness and Dawn"! For second there is none that can match "The Lord of Death." What characterization. With 1940 you really had something definite in mind. To mention a few of the better stories, I would rate them as follows:

1. "Man Who Saved the Earth"—Hall.
2. "Planet Juggler"—Frederick.
3. "On the Brink of 2000"—Smith.

For serials, I cannot see fit to compare. You just don't.

Getting away from comments, I would like to know what you thought of the idea of a broadside in your magazine. People dislike coupons, because it means cutting up the magazine. The way I see it you can put a detachable slip of paper in the magazine. On the other side, you can have a subscription coupon. On the reverse you can put the stories tentatively selected, and print them in the order of liking. Of course this is just an idea.

As for those serials, don't you think "six-part" serials, which take six months to complete, are a little too much? Couldn't you take out some of those little stories and make them three parts or at least four? After all, most classics are serials. There are many complete stories in ARGOSY, but how many are well known? They are decidedly in the minority. Or put out a sister magazine, which caters exclusively to serials in their complete form. In ARGOSY, you wait six weeks for your serial, in F.F.M. it takes six months, or six times as long.

Now for another problem. What about stories from other magazines such as *Blue Book, Thrill Book, Black Cat,* etc.? Whatever you do, please stay away from reprinting these stories.

Most collectors have fairly complete files of these.

Comes a time in every letter when they tell you what to reprint. Only difference lies in the fact I'm going to survey the readers column and pick 'em out from the readers' choice:

1. The rest of the Farley trilogy, 2. "Darkness and Dawn," 3. "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," 4. "Planeteer," 5. "Jason, Son of Jason."

As for me "Radio Trilogy," "Planeteer," "Fungus Isle," "Palos of the Dog Star Pack."

RICHARD B. CRAIN.

1734 Willow Ave.,
WEEHAWKEN, N. J.

Attention of Fans

The General Secretary of the FUTURIAN LEAGUE invites science-fiction fans interested in dynamic conceptions of the future to get in touch with him. Address, the Futurian League, 2574 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y. A stamped self-addressed envelope would be appreciated.

P. S.—Delighted to hear of new policy on F.F.M. and F.N. Congratulations.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Finis" Perfect

Sorry to see F.F.M. go bi-monthly, but I welcome its companion magazine "Fantastic Novels."

The May-June F.F.M is fine. But—get ready—the best story was the one you hid at the end—"Finis." Too bad it was so short. I really enjoyed it immensely. How about more like it? "Sunken Cities" was fair. Perhaps it is because I have read similar stories.

Paul's cover is great! But what happened to the trimmed edges? Oh well, it's the stories that really count.

Sciencerely,

DAVID GLAZER.

12 Fowler Street,
DORCHESTER, MASS.

A Big Compliment

I am new in the ranks of the Fantasy Fans. In fact I started, in earnest, with the first issue of F.F.M. I have every issue from the first to the present (May-June).

This is my first contribution to any magazine reader's department; but here goes.

As to your new arrangement, I wholeheartedly approve of it. I can't wait for the issue of FANTASTIC NOVELS to make its appearance. That is a very good title. Incidentally I hope you keep F.F.M. and F.N. one month apart. Other readers, I am sure, would like it that way, too. If there is one thing I do not approve of, it is the rough edges on F.F.M. If there is one thing that cheapens a good (emphasis on the good for F.F.M.) magazine it is ts uncut edges. Please do away with them.

Since I have read very few of the old classics, cannot give suggestions as to which I would ke to see reprinted. I'll leave that to the older aders.

My favorite author is A. Merritt. And my vorite artists are, of course, Finlay and Paul. ease use them on all your covers for both F.M. and F.N., and as many interior illustions as possible.

The three stories that I liked best, so far, re: "The Conquest of the Moon Pool," "The ıd Spot" and "The Radio Man." I like the novels best. Please print sequel to all ies that have them.

I will now attempt to classify the May-June of F.F.M. I will not classify them in order, ıse sometimes there is no distinction be- ı them, so I will rate them from 1 to 5. ıng very poor; 2, poor; 3, good; 4, very 5, 100% perfect.

nken Cities" (3)—Although well written isn't much to the plot. It is more like a tory.

ree Lines of Old French" (4)—This is st Merritt short I've read, and it is a b. More of them.

Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

Be Healthier, Happier — Live Longer

When you can get for 35 cents a safe, efficient and harmless stimulant and diuretic that should flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons and acid that are now doing you harm, why continue to break your restful sleep by getting up through the night?

Don't be an EASY MARK and accept a substitute—Ask for Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules — right from Haarlem in Holland. GET GOLD MEDAL—the original—the genuine. Look for the Gold Medal on the box—35 cents.

Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder [illegible] be backache, puffy eyes, shifting pain[illegible] or scanty passage. Don't accept a [illegible]

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write: CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 28, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WRITE STORIES that SELL

Mrs. Grace Blanchard had an idea for a story. We criticised her story and gave it a new name and told her where to send it. She got a substantial check the first time out. And E.K.N. of Clayton, Ind., got $500.00 for the first story. What a thrill! Each month many of our men and women graduates get the thrill of successful authorship. Let our 22 years of experience guide you. Write now.

JACK LONDON wrote us:—"Your course in short story writing is excellently comprehensive and practical."

FREE BOOKLET Write for Free Booklet, "The Art of Story Writing," with explanation of our personal criticism and manuscript sales service. No cost or obligation. Tells how others succeeded and what opportunities await you. Money back agreement. Easy payments. Because you are interested send for free booklet at once. Write

HOOSIER INSTITUTE, Room 137, Hoosier Bldg., Chicago.

FREE TRIAL OFFER

NEW REMINGTON NOISELESS PORTABLE

AS LOW AS 10¢ A DAY

10-Day Free Trial Offer

AT LAST! The famous Remington NOISELESS Portable plus Carrying Case is yours for only a small deposit and terms as little as ten cents a day. Brand new. Not rebuilt. Standard keyboard and every modern feature. Free typing instruction book. 10-Day free trial. You don't risk a penny. WE PAY ALL SHIPPING CHARGES. Act now! Write Remington Rand Inc., Dept. 145-7 465 Washington St., Buffalo; N.Y.

NEURITIS Relieve Pain in Few Minutes or Money Back

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia or Lumbago in a few minutes, get NURITO, the fine formula, used by thousands. No opiates. Does the work quickly—must relieve cruel pain to your satisfaction in a few minutes—or your money back. Don't suffer. Clip this ad now as a reminder to ask your druggist for NURITO today.

STOP the ITCH of Insect Bites—Heat Rash

For quick relief from itching of insect bites, heat rash, athlete's foot, hives, eczema and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D.D.D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.

U. S. GOVERNMENT JOBS!

START

$1260 to $2100 a Year

Get Ready Immediately.

Men—Women

Thousands appointments every year.

Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. E251
Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs, salaries, duties, ages, etc. (2) Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name.....

Address.....

"The Blind Spot" (5)—There is no doubt that this is a wonderful classic. The plot is engrossing, and the writing is superb.

"Raiders of the Air" (2)—I do not know how this became famous. It's too short to make a good story. It could be the beginning of a fairly good story.

"Pegasus" (3)—This is certainly fantastic, but the dwarf makes sound like a fairy tale.

"A World of Indexed Numbers" (4)—It has a very good plot, and I like the way he got to the future. There isn't enough science in it.

"Finis" (5)—I can truthfully say this is the best short story I ever read on the subject. (The destruction of the world.) It has a well balanced plot, just enough science and action for a short

And now for departments.

The Readers' Viewpoint is just the right size now, 5 pages. Please keep it that way.

As for autobiographies they are all right f famed authors, but not for new or little know authors.

I think Yesterday's Futurama is a very i teresting panorama of the future as seen in t old days. More of them if you have any.

The Editor's page is just as important to as The Readers' Viewpoint is to the Editor.

There should be a popularity poll; and can count on me to send in my comments both F.F.M. and F.N. for every issue.

I agree with L. M. Jensen in that you sh not have too many departments, but I thi department aside from The Readers' Viewp where the readers can discuss what they li a story, is desirable. This could be very val to the Editor, and to the authors in writing stories. For example, I will tell you what which other readers may agree with or e oppose. That's the idea of the departme

As for science-fiction and Fantasy, I lik about equally well. In science-fiction I l stories with some true science woven i is, when reactions are not totally im using our present standards of motion, ti I like the future stories best when they our present time and in some way time into the future. This is where dee is used to explain this occurrence.

For fantasy stories, I like them tak in our present time and on our world.

Well, I guess I covered everything you really consider that debate de Good luck to you in your new endeav in the future.

GEORGE I

2528 N. Talman Ave.,
CHICAGO, ILL.

Extra copies of FAMOUS FANTASTIC (15¢) and FANTASTIC NOVELS (20¢) in limited numbers. Send for these
The Frank A. Munsey Co.
280 Broadway, N. Y.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE SILVER BUCK

This phantom horseman gallops again; this time into Basin County to swap lead with a band of outlaws who plan to rustle the country dry of its cattle.

You'll hear the pounding hoofs of thundering herds . . . smell the pungent odor of gunsmoke . . . when the brave avenger's dreaded calling card—a silver dollar—rings at the feet of a lawbreaker. Ride with **The Silver Buck** at a breathtaking pace in a brand-new western adventure entitled

A RIDER WITHOUT A RANGE

a complete, exciting cow-country novel in the **July** issue of

RED ★ STAR WESTERN

NOW ON THE STANDS . . . 10c

In event of a sellout, send 10¢ to 280 Broadway, N. Y. C., and receive a copy by mail.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smokers by the millions are making Chesterfield the Busiest Cigarette in America. . . . It takes the right combination of the world's best tobaccos to give you a cigarette that is definitely MILDER, BETTER-TASTING and COOLER-SMOKING . . . all at the same time. *For real smoking pleasure, buy Chesterfields every day.*

Copyright 1940, Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED